



Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2008 with funding from
Microsoft Corporation

To my dear brother,
from his daughter
Miriam.

Christmas 1921

By ELIZABETH W. CHAMPNEY

ROMANCE OF THE FEUDAL CHÂTEAUX.
ROMANCE OF THE BOURBON CHÂTEAUX.
ROMANCE OF THE FRENCH ABBEYS.
ROMANCE OF THE ITALIAN VILLAS.
ROMANCE OF ROMAN VILLAS.
ROMANCE OF THE FRENCH CHÂTEAUX
(FEUDAL—RENAISSANCE—BOURBON).
ROMANCE OF IMPERIAL ROME.
ROMANCE OF OLD BELGIUM.
ROMANCE OF OLD JAPAN.





ROMANCE OF RUSSIA

FROM Czar TO BOLSHIEV

ELIZABETH W. CHAMBERLAIN

FROM Czar TO Czar

Russian Wedding Feast

From the Russian by K. E. Wilson
Translated by Elizabeth W. Chamberlain

Copyright 1917

G. P. PUTNAM'S SONS
NEW YORK AND LONDON
THE BOSTON BOOK CONCERN



Russian Wedding Feast

From the Painting by K. E. Makovski

Permission Art and Archæology

ROMANCE OF RUSSIA

FROM RURIK TO BOLSHEVIK

BY

ELIZABETH W. CHAMPNEY

AND

FRÈRE CHAMPNEY

ILLUSTRATED

G. P. PUTNAM'S SONS
NEW YORK AND LONDON
The Knickerbocker Press

1921

Copyright, 1921
by
Elizabeth W. Champney

Printed in the United States of America



PREFACE

RED RUSSIA

Barbaric land of bodeful destiny,
Red Russia, steeped with centuries of gore,
Since Ruric erst thy lake-ways roved of yore
And yoked thy bloody tribes in unity.
While Fair Sun Vladimir with chivalry
And high emprise, the crimsoned cross upbore,
Till Tartar hordes the steppes laid waste once more,
And Ivan turned the tide of that dark sea.

Then Peter forged an empire built of blood
And Catharine smirched its scutcheon red with shame,
While Bonaparte the Kremlin razed with flame.
In vain a frightened Tsar the Serfs set free,
For drunk with liberty they rose, a raging flood,
And whelmed the helpless realm in anarchy.

NOT alone from her scarlet flag of anarchy has Russia merited the title Red. Ere history began she reeked with gore. Ruthless tribes battled for the infant nation at her very birth. Barbarian hordes were repulsed by Slavonian warriors, who, in turn, warred among themselves. The ensanguined sword of conflict was never sheathed. But behind the strife of centuries lies the impassioned longing for liberty. Everywhere, as we step down the ages, we discover heroic instances of

sacrifice for an ideal, and stirring episodes of tragedy and romance.

The authors have striven to convey in ten successive sketches, an impression of the historic struggle of Russia. They do not claim accuracy in every detail; unbridled fancy may have caracoled too freely in the bypaths of Romance. But they have endeavored to present a suggestion of the Slav spirit in the clang of the ancient *bylinas*,¹ and the naïve charm of the *skazkas*.² These fragments of a national epic, like the sagas of the Scandinavians, are "variants of traditional history which have gathered additions from the imagination of bards till the legend is a far cry from the lives of the primitive heroes, a mosaic of broken bits."³

Such a patchwork picture we paint of Fair Sun Vladimir, the King Arthur of Russia, and his *druzhina* or Table Round; Dobrynya, knightliest of all, less spiritual than Galahad, but with no taint of Launcelot's treachery to mar his chivalry; while Apraxia resembles Guinevere and Ilya, Merlin.

Then comes our old friend, Marco Polo, Prince of Vagabonds, to give us a new version of the Mongol invasion in his incredible chronicle.

Like a blossom pressed between the musty leaves of some ancient tome is the tale of lovesome Mary Hast-

¹ *Bylinas*, epic songs.

² *Skazkas*, wonder-tales.

³ Isabel Hapgood, *Epic Songs of Russia* best of all English versions of the *bylinas*.

ings whom the Red Tsar would fain have made his bride against her will had not Nikita, *sans peur et sans reproche*—but let us not forestall the unfolding of our story.

A great prime minister lays bare the secret drama of rivalry between the manliest of Tsars and the “spawn of Satan,” Mazeppa.

The Faun of Oranienbaum smilingly recounts indiscreet amours of a famous empress and her reckless favorite.

From the lips of a cuirassier we hear the tale of Napoleon’s ill-omened march to Moscow and a Cossack maiden’s love.

The vain idealism of the nihilists, thus named by Turgenev because they accomplished nothing, finds expression in the story of a Siberian exile.

And last we describe the experience of an American whelmed in the Bolshevik chaos and a pilgrimage to the romantic shrines of ancient Muscovy.

Here, gentles, are our tales tragic and gay, venture-some or tranquil, true and untrue, each reflecting its phase of history or national character, interwoven with original transcriptions of ancient and modern poetry.

Wherefore we hope they may prove not wholly worthless in the reading.

CONTENTS

	PAGE
PREFACE	iii
CHAPTER	
I.—THE QUEST OF THE TITAN	3
II.—THE SPARROWS OF YAROSLAVNA	33
III.—THE TRUTH TELLER	62
IV.—THE GOLDEN HORDE	89
V.—THE RED TSAR	124
VI.—THE QUEST OF THE CIRCLING SEAS	168
VII.—THE FAUN OF ORANIENBAUM	204
VIII.—AN EMPEROR'S FOLLY	226
IX.—THE EXILE	265
X.—THE RED TERROR	304
XI.—SHRINES OF ANCIENT MUSCOVY	338

ILLUSTRATIONS

PAGE

Russian Wedding Feast—*K. E. Makovski* *Frontispiece*
Permission *Art and Archæology*.

"Then saddled Svyatogor his courser fair,
And rode afield seeking adventures light"—*I. Bilibin* 8
From a government edition of Bylinas and Skazki.

"Away sped Cloudfall leaping lofty mounts and wide
rivers"—*I. Bilibin* 12
From a government edition of Bylinas and Skazki.

"Beneath a brodered dais lay Tamara fondling a
loathly dragon"—*Frank C. Papé* 22
From the *Russian Story Book* by Dr. Richard Wilson.
Permission MacMillan & Co.

"As Vladimir sailed away in his dragon-ship Koncha-
kovna waved a blithe farewell"—*Frank C. Papé* 44
From the *Russian Story Book* by Dr. Richard Wilson.
Permission MacMillan & Co.

"Above the wind-swept steppe the vultures sweep,
The grass has withered on the thirsty plain,
But those brave hearts, who 'neath the grasses sleep,
From Death's dark night will ne'er awake again" 46
V. M. Vasnetzov

Reproduced from *The Russian Arts* by permission of Rosa
Newmarch and Herbert Jenkins, Ltd., London.

	PAGE
“Creeping from beneath his slain comrades, Vladimir broke his blade in token of surrender”—<i>I. Bilibin</i> From a government edition of <i>Bylinas and Skazki</i>.	48
The Betrothal—<i>K. E. Makovsi</i> Permission <i>Art and Archaeology</i>.	56
“Dobrynya bestrode the good wolf who trotted docilely through the forest, Nastasya galloping after”—<i>I. Bilibin</i> From a government edition of <i>Bylinas and Skazki</i>.	74
“Vladimir, Aloysia and the Warrior Maid vainly quested Dobrynya”—<i>Vasnetzov</i> From <i>Russian Heroes, Saints and Sinners</i> by Sonia Howe. Permission Williams and Norgate, London.	78
“This is the Noble Knight Marco Polo of Venice” From the <i>Book of Ser Marco Polo</i>, Translated by Colonel Henry Yule. Permission John Murray, London.	90
“Summoned from his wedding-feast Alexander knelt before the altar”—<i>Kramskoi</i> From <i>Russian Heroes, Saints and Sinners</i> by Sonia Howe. Permission Williams and Norgate, London.	98
“The Oriental raiment belied her race, but in her hand she cherished a golden cross”—<i>Jaroslav Cermak</i> Permission Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.	110
“The distracted father knelt over the son clasping him to his breast in impotent remorse”—<i>I. E. Repin</i> From <i>The Russian School of Painting</i> by Benoix. Permission Alfred A. Knopf.	134
House of Nikitia Romanoff, Moscow Copyright Underwood & Underwood, New York.	148

Illustrations

xi

	PAGE
"The Bride of the Terem"— <i>V. Makovski</i>	162
Permission <i>Art and Archæology</i> .	
"'Tis my Crown of Thorns," smiled little Dimitri gazing up trustfully"— <i>M. Nesterov</i>	166
From <i>The Russian Arts</i> .	
Permission Rosa Newmarch and Herbert Jenkins, Ltd., London.	
"Thereupon the Sea King whirled about in a frenzied dance"— <i>Frank C. Papé</i>	170
From the <i>Russian Story Book</i> by Dr. Richard Wilson.	
Permission MacMillan & Co.	
The "Man Tsar" Peter Alexeivitch Romanoff	176
From a print by J. Smitt—after a picture by Kneller.	
Permission J. O. Wright.	
"A pack of wolves coursed beside me"	182
From the painting by Horace Vernet.	
Permission Maison Ad. Braun & Cie, Paris.	
"Vague, whispered vows of love you heard"	204
Permission W. A. Mansell & Co., London.	
"Clasping his mossy shoulders, Varya whispered her secret in his pointed ear"	206
Permission Violet Mersereau and Editor <i>Film Fun</i> .	
Catharine II Empress of all the Russias	214
From a print by Caroline Watson—after a portrait by Rosselin.	
Permission J. O. Wright.	
"Jean Gaillard Montpellier, Captain of the Emperor's Cuirassiers"— <i>Edouard Detaille</i>	228
Permission Metropolitan Museum, New York.	

	PAGE
“The Burning of Moscow. The sight we looked upon was magnificent and terrible” <i>Vassili Verestchagin</i> P. C. G. Toni Landau Co.	238
“Look Sire!” exclaimed Murat, “Moscow is burning in a dozen places!”—<i>Vassili Verestchagin</i> P. C. G. Toni Landau Co.	244
“My cuirassiers were engaged in a desperate scrim- mage with the Cossacks”—<i>Edouard Detaille</i> Permission Metropolitan Museum.	258
“And then came on the frost and snow” <i>Vassili Verestchagin</i> P. C. G. Toni Landau Co.	262
“A rifle slung across his back, His caftan, cap of Astrakhan Proclaim him plain a wild Cossack From distant Dnieper’s endless span” <i>W. Kowalski</i> P. C. G. Toni Landau Co.	264
“His Great Master”—<i>I. E. Repin</i> P. C. G. Toni Landau Co.	266
“At a barred window holding up the little boy that he might feed some hungry pigeons, sat Tanya” <i>N. A. Yaroshenko</i> From <i>The Russian Arts</i>. Permission Rosa Newmarch and Herbert Jenkins, Ltd., London.	292
“With the Moujiks” Permission Keystone View Company, Inc. Press Illustrating Service, New York.	294

Illustrations

xiii

PAGE

- "Behind the barricade the girls' Red Cross administered first aid"—*F. Malania* 316

Permission *The Sphere*, London.

- "Billowing waves of golden grain surged onward, tirelessly questing their unknown shore" 318

Shishkin

From *The Russian Arts*.

Permission Rosa Newmarch and Herbert Jenkins, Ltd., London.

- "Under the great, red flag, which flapped and tugged like some enormous bird of prey, I discerned plainly the saturnine face of Lenine" 326

Permission Press Illustrating Service, Inc.

- Interior Cathedral of Saint Vladimir, Kief 328

Copyright by Underwood & Underwood, New York.

- Shrine of the Nativity Cathedral of Saint Vladimir, Kief 330

Copyright by Underwood & Underwood, New York.

- Cathedral of Archangel

- "Slender domes and picturesque exterior murals" 332

Permission of American Red Cross.

- Monastery of St. Michael Archangel

- "Above its high stockade the church lifts gleaming walls and massive golden domes" 334

Permission American Red Cross.

- A Moujik's Izba.

- "Balconies and curiously carved gables."

- "Mansion of a Boyar—with its covered stairway" 336

From *L'Art Russe* by Viollet-le-Duc.

Church of the Nativity, Moscow.

"Five tall towers thrust their slender spires in a surprising silhouette" 338

Copyright by Underwood & Underwood, New York.

Church of Our Saviour, Moscow.

"Massive central dome and four flanking towers,
A revival of the purest Oriental type" 340

Copyright by Underwood & Underwood, New York.

The Spasskoi Gate. (Gate of Our Saviour) 342

From a drawing by Frère Champney.

Bell Tower of Ivan Veliki—"Whose great tocsin often
summoned the populace to stormy deliberations in
the Kremlin Court" 344

Copyright Underwood & Underwood, New York.

Cathedral of the Uspensky (The Assumption).

"One of the finest ecclesiastical edifices in Russia,
where the Tsars were formerly crowned" 346

Copyright Underwood & Underwood, New York.

"The Kremlin: The classic cornices seem wearisome
and out-of-place 'mid these Oriental mosques dart-
ing heavenward golden spires and bulbous bell-
towers." 348

From *Turrets and Towers* by Esther Singleton.

Permission Dodd, Mead & Co., New York.

Interior Cathedral of the Assumption—"In whose
golden cavern were stabled the studs of Napoleon" 350

Vassili Verestchagin.

P. C. G. Toni Landau Co.

Romance of Russia
From Rurik to Bolshevik

Romance of Russia

CHAPTER I

THE QUEST OF THE TITAN

Prelude

April now with silver showers,
Clad in gleaming, woodland flowers
Like a laughing sylvan sprite,
Comes to bring the world delight.

Golden sunlight wreathes her hair,
Dewdrops glisten on her face,
Through her veil of blossoms fair
Gleams a smile of winsome grace.

Swift to greet her runs the rill,
Stirs the wood and wakes the hill,
Myriad birds blithe love-songs sing,
Earth rejoice! The World is Spring!

TYUTCHÉV.

SO sang the Murom maidens at their Easter *Khorovod*,¹ while they showered spring flowers upon their leader who lay as though dead, 'neath the blossoms. At the final phrase the apparent corpse sprang lightly to her feet and whirled merrily about with her

¹ *Khorovod*, the circling dance attended by choral song.

blithe companions. They were celebrating the recrudescence of Nature after her long wintry entombment.¹ The snow had melted from hills and plains but here and there dwindling drifts still lingered in the shadowy recesses of the forest. "A green noise," the awakening of vegetable life, pervaded the pastures. Cowslips flaunted their golden chalices in sun-kissed meadows. The hills were ablaze with a riot of rhododendrons. The turbulent Oka was in full flood, racing tumultuously to pour its waters in Mother Volga.

The Khorovod ended, maidens and *moujiks*² took their seats in the deepening shadows about the fast-dying fire. The scarlet flames of sunset faded to sombre purple. Tree and bush were blurred in a vague black wall. Out of the velvet dusk came the silvery trill of a nightingale. Of a sudden the moujiks ceased their murmuring and listened with rapt delight. After a moment the feathered troubadour stilled its minstrelsy. A hush brooded over the assembly as blind Arkady, descendant of a race of bards, stirred the smouldering embers. Dishevelled elf-locks framed his withered features and a tenuous, white beard hung to the border of his caftan.

Slowly he rose, arm uplifted like an ancient Grecian seer, eyes blindly groping in mystic frenzy.

¹ Few places remain in Russia where these semi-heathen rites survive, save Murom, the oldest town in the country. Older even than royal Kief-town, for when the elder gods renounced Holy Russia to Christ, Perun the Thunderer remained on earth to dwell in Murom.

² *Moujiks*, peasants.

Suddenly he struck from his lyre a long, tremulous chord. His body swayed in rhythm with the throbbing strings. He began to sing:

"Well may ye ask, *Taverische*,¹ whence come these tales of eld. Listen and I will tell.

"The tremulous stars leaning down from the blue
Have whispered their secrets divine to the flowers!
The infatuate blossoms deep drunken of dew
Peered forth through their slumberous shadowy bowers,
And repeated the tales to the gossipy breeze
Who, with lips indiscreet and incontinent mirth,
Blew them forth o'er the moorlands and mountains and seas
To the uttermost bounds of the bright smiling earth!

"Now as spring, rosy-fingered, ethereal, bright,
Caresses the world with her blossomy life,
My heart overflows with the star's radiant light;
And throughout the long days of laborious strife,
And nights never-ending of sorrow and pain,
O daughters celestial of beauty and truth,
From the heart of my dreams, in the songs of my youth,
I give back your wonderful secrets again!"

FOFANOFF.

I

THE GIFTS OF LADA

"I strike the lyre," cried Arkady, to the time-worn epic lay, in praise of Perun the Thunderer, known among men as Ilya, bravest of all heroes of Holy Russia.

¹ *Taverische*, comrades.

The rune runneth that upon a time The Thunderer sat in his cave of clouds, gazing enviously upon the bountiful green earth.

Full sad was he and rent with lonely longing, for all the older gods, his erstwhile companions, had vanished from the wind-swept steppes of Heaven. To him thereupon came Lada, beauteous goddess of Love, bearing a missive from the All Father.

"Behold!" thus read the scroll, "the ancient order changeth and a new god reigneth on earth. Thy labour is accomplished, come thou and dwell henceforth in the golden fanes of 'Valhalla!'"

Fain was Perun to obey save that he cherished the pitiful world and its brood of strifeful men. Moreover he hated with an implacable passion the terrible Titan, Svyatogor, incarnate spirit of evil, enemy of all human kind.

Wherefore did Perun linger, riding over the cloud-swept sky-plain, pouring upon earth his gladsome rain. To the All Father he dispatched the beauteous goddess Lada bearing answer:

"Mighty All Father! If so be the ancient gods must needs perish grant me but the common lot of thy earth-children! Let me toil and suffer even as they, if I may battle with the Titan Svyatogor, and in the end slay him utterly!"

Then to Perun, as he sat disconsolate in his cloud-cave again came Lada, saying:

"Be of good cheer! The All Father granteth thy plea. Behold, he vouchsafeth thee this magic purse. Therein thou wilt find three priceless gifts: Victory, Love, Immortality!"

"The first," cried Perun, "will suffice for the slaying of the Titan. The third will I guard all my life, but of the second gift will I not at all."

Lada smiled upon him indulgently, as a mother at a wayward child.

"Verily," she laughed, "for love one day wilt thou gladly barter the twain."

Thus speaking she placed within his hand the magic purse and melted as a mist.

Thereupon the god was transformed to the mortal Ilya and, descending the Rainbow Bridge of Heaven, rode the wind-swept steppes in the lusty pride of youth. Red blood coursed his veins, hunger gnawed his vitals, and a manful thirst parched his throat. A youthful savage was he, but gentle of heart withal and free from guile.

High and low Ilya quested the Titan but found him not, though folk told how he had laid waste smiling *izbas*,¹ rending, slaying, and bearing women captive.

It chanced upon a day that Ilya came upon a ruined garth wherein a withered crone wailed over the lifeless body of her boy.

Torn with ruth Ilya cried:

¹ *Isbas*, cottages.

"Tell me, Little Mother, where dwelleth the monster that I may put an end to his evil deeds!"

The crone replied that the giant dwelt in a mountain lair thirty versts¹ distant.

His heart swelling with eagerness, Ilya set forth to slay the giant. But as he caracoled lightly over the wind-swept plain, leaping rivers of ten versts, singing for lustiness of youth, the magic purse Lada had bestowed upon him fell unperceived from his girdle!

II

THE MAGIC PURSE

Then saddled Svyátogor his shaggy mare
And rode afield questing adventure light.
Of all foul fiends was none who could compare
With him in craft and superhuman might;
Through all his veins there coursed a living fire
Flaming with wrath and lust of bloody fight.
"Behold!" he bragged in overweening mirth,
"I fain would slay the whole wide, wind-swept earth!"

Forthwith, as o'er the endless steppes he rove,
A scrip of silver suddenly he spied.
He lowered lance and tried the pouch to move;
In vain he strove, the purse his strength defied.
He gripped it with his fists but nathless found
He could not lift the wallet from the ground.

Then marvelled thus the Titan in amaze:
"Full many a moon I've roved the cloud-swept plain,

¹ *Verst*, three fourths of a mile.



"Then saddled Svyatogor his courser fair,
And rode afield, seeking adventures light."

I. Bilibin

From a government edition of the *bylinas* and *skazki*

But like a marvel ne'er hath met my gaze
That such a paltry scrip so small and light,
May not be lifted by my Titan might!"

Then from his shaggy mare he sudden flies
And grasps the magic wallet once again;
But, though he sweat and tugged with might and main,
Scarce higher than an inch the pouch did rise.
When, suddenly, upon the mossy plain
He stricken sank, incontinent with pain
And tears of shame streamed from his blood-shot eyes!

ANCIENT BYLINA.

Upon a day the Titan rode across the steppes to
Royal Novgorod intent upon the capture of Princess
Vasilissa the Fair.

In due time he came to the palace of her father, Volk
Vasilyvitch, and strode into the great hall where the
King sat at meat.

"Hail, thou goodly giant," quoth the terrified monarch,
"an thou comest in peace deign to enter."

"Whether it be peace or strife I care not," mumbled
the Titan. "I come in quest of thy daughter, whom,
by the beard of Striborg,¹ I have sworn to wed."

"That shall be as my daughter willeth," frowned the
chieftain.

"Suffer me to offer thy daughter this paltry gift,"
smiled Svyatogor slyly. Whereupon he took from beneath
his mantle a crystal casket and gave it to the delighted
monarch who bade the Titan join the feast.

¹Striborg—God of the Winds.

With the first grey gleam of dawn Vasilissa awoke and gazed from her casement. Weird winds wailed in the birches as though recounting some bodeful secret. The pale rays of a blue moon fell upon the casket, seemingly imprisoned within its frail, translucent walls.

Drawn by curiosity the princess descended, peered within, then entered the crystal bower. Scarce had she crossed the threshold when a door closed with a clang, prisoning her within.

Leaping the wall, Svyatogor lifted the casket to his shoulder and strode from the garden.

III

THE CRYSTAL CASKET

The while, all unwotting, Ilya rode across the steppe in quest of the Titan. After days of futile effort Ilya found the mountain lair, but no trace could he find of Svyatogor.

Wherefore Ilya mounted a mossy oak that he might scan the wind-swept plain.

Then sudden from the forest rose a groan,

A wail of mighty waters weltering fast,
Fair Mother Earth with travail dire did moan,
The mountains quaked with wrathful rumblings torn,
And tiny streams were turned to torrents vast.

When o'er the wind-swept steppe did dreadful loom
A Titan, loftier than the cloud-rack light,

Whose brow was lost amid the endless gloom,
Bearing upon his back a casket bright.

Then to a mossy oak straightway he strode
And took from off his back the burden light,
And oped the casket with a golden key;
When from its crystal heart a maiden bright,
More fair and radiant than the orient moon,
Sprang forth into the silent azure night.

ANCIENT BYLINA.

Scarce drawing breath so utter his amaze, Ilya first beheld the loveliness of mortal maid. As he gazed entranced his heart swelled with love. Ne'er in the militant maids of Valhalla had he discerned such surpassing grace. He flamed with resentment that so peerless a princess should bow before such a loathly monster.

"Fetch me wine, wench!" thundered the Titan.

The maiden made no protest but wending meekly to the cave, returned with a beaker of good green wine. As the giant raised his hand to drink Ilya shook the oak boughs, whereat sleep-compelling berries of mistletoe fell unperceived into his cup.

The Titan drained the wine at a single draught, and his head fell limp on his breast.

Slipping down the branches, Ilya whispered to the astonished maiden:

"Haste while the giant sleepeth; mount my good Cloudfall; we shall outride the wind to Novgorod!"

The maiden clasped him close. Away sped Cloud-

fall, leaping mountains and rivers as if they were but hillocks and rills.

Of a sudden Vasilissa gave a shriek! "Ware thee!" she cried, as a trembling shook her.

Ilya turned in his saddle, and lo, it was not a whirlwind he discerned coursing madly over hill and steppe, but the Titan on his shaggy grey like turbulent Dnieper rushing to the southern sea.

Under the lash of the Titan the great charger leaped verst-wide valleys and snow-crowned mountains. Its nostrils flashed flame and its eyes glowed like lamping coals.

In his hairy fist Svyatogor brandished a fiery sword. Ever and anon he would hurl it to the clouds and as it fell would catch it ere it struck the mossy plain.

"Wolf!" he thundered, "thou robber of my hen-roost!"

Ilya sprang to earth and whipped out his sword.

Then thus taunted the Titan: "Methought I heard a gnat buzzing in the bracken!"

With a leap Ilya slashed the Titan with his sword.

"The gnat stingeth," muttered Svyatogor, "but I will crush him between my thumb and finger!"

Again and again Ilya attacked the giant, but his blows rebounded from the hairy hide like hail from a roof of tile. Of a sudden his blade snapped at the hilt. Seizing a mace he belaboured the Titan on shin and thigh till he moaned like a peevish child.



"Away sped Cloudfall leaping lofty mounts and wide rivers."

I. Bilibin

From a government edition of the *bylinas* and *skazki*

When white dawn broke on the grey-blue mountains still they fought. Of a sudden the giant caught Ilya in his colossal fist and well-nigh crushed the breath from his body. Realizing that human strength would not suffice Ilya bethought him of the magic purse. He groped at his baldric, fumbling for the scrip, hoping to draw from it the gift of victory; but, dire mischance, the purse was gone!

Perceiving his opportunity, the ogre smote Ilya suddenly upon the brow. "I die," groaned Ilya: "Beloved, list to my last command:

"Lay me beneath the mossy mead,
When I am cold and dead;
And at my foot-stone set my steed,
A cross before my head;
And set my sabre in my hand
That all who pass may stare,
Before the cross a moment stand
To breathe a silent prayer.

"And by my side my long lance lay
And shield of graven gold,
That all may say who wend that way
'Here lies a Cossack bold!'"¹

Then darkness overcame him.

Good steed Cloudfall, beholding Ilya in such sorry plight, addressed the maiden with human words:

"Behold, Princess, the magic purse lieth on yonder

¹ Sakarof.

plain. Haste we thither for the succour of my poor master!"

Thus speaking, Cloudfall galloped to the spot where lay the scrip and, albeit the might of the Titan had not sufficed, the maiden raised it without an effort. Thereupon Vasilissa sped back to where her lover lay as one dead and kneeling over him, lamented:

"Ai! thou brave and goodly youth, hast indeed met death for my poor sake?"

And weeping bitterly, she pressed him to her warm, white breast.

After a little Ilya returned to consciousness. Peering as through a mist, he strove vainly to rise, but strength failed him and he fell back, wildered whether 'twere phantom or living maiden kneeling o'er him.

At that instant the Titan rushed upon the Princess, gripping and slaving her with loathly lips.

Again Ilya struggled to rise, but, strive though he might, in no wise could he lift himself from the moist earth.

In bitterness of spirit, he prayed:

"Grant, Mighty All Father, that I may vanquish this loathly monster!"

Thereupon Cloudfall whinnying impatiently seized the purse with his teeth and laid it before his master.

Ilya grasped the purse eagerly. Of a sudden, as 'twere he had drunk a cask of good green wine, his strength mounted till it was as the might of ten. Up-

springing to his nimble feet he smote the giant a lusty blow between the eyes.

Svyatogor reeled an instant then crashed to earth like a falling forest oak.

Knotting the bridle about the giant's body, Ilya bound him to the tail of his goodly steed.

"Trudge behind!" he laughed, "to royal Novgorod, where methinks, a princely welcome waits thee!"

Thus across the wind-swept steppes wended Ilya, his fair princess nestling contentedly in his arms, while the Titan trudged wrathfully behind.

IV

GLAMOURY

(How Ilya won what he desired and lost that which he won)

A ringing shout rose through royal Novgorod as, escorted by the clamouring concourse, Ilya rode in triumph bearing the lost Princess and dragging the giant at his charger's heels.

"'Tis Perun the far-darter," cried the priests, "who hath returned with thy daughter, O heaven descended Lord!"

"Art thou in sooth the Hurler of Thunderbolts?" demanded the bewildered monarch.

While Ilya mused whether 'twere better to reclaim his godhead, Vasilyvitch made him obeisance.

"If indeed thou art mighty Perun thy word shall be an

oracle unto our people; if but mortal then shall the Princess mete the reward she deemeth thy desert and thou shalt go thy way!"

Between the aloofness of deity and Vasilissa no whit did Ilya hesitate.

"But mortal am I," he declared, "a lover who hath found his goddess."

Thus speaking he knelt with Vasilissa while her father gave them his royal blessing.

Thereafter Volk Vasilyvitch lavished upon his son-to-be a host of honours, making him governor of the fortress wherein the giant was prisoned.

Now it fortuneed that on the morn before the wedding, as Ilya rode in the forest, he beheld a golden key. Alighting from his steed he picked it up and, marveling greatly, bestowed it in his wallet.

When he had gone a little way he encountered a fair and lovesome maiden. She bent anxiously raking the leaves the while she wept bitterly.

The knight demanding whence her distress the damsel made answer she had lost the key to her castle.

"Tell me, fair Lady, if this be thine!" asked Ilya, giving her, as he deemed, the key he had found. But his eyes were glamour'd by enchantment, so that he placed in her hand the key to the Titan's dungeon. She seized it eagerly.

"Kind and goodly youth," smiled the damsel, "come

with me to my fair castle, where shall I requite thee fittingly!"

Ilya might have yielded but that fingering the wallet, he touched the gift of Lada. Of a sudden the damsel faded, and in her stead stood a wrinkled *Baba Yaga*!¹

"Begone, Witch," he commanded, "my heart is faithful to Vasilissa!"

"Happen thou shouldst lose her," she made promise, "come to me and I will show where she bideth."

With this the witch vanished and Ilya went his way. On his return he recounted his adventure to the Princess.

"Thou didst say her nay," mused Vasilissa, "albeit so beauteous was the damsel."

Whereupon Ilya displayed the talisman, gift of white-armed Lada, whispering the while:

The Talisman

"Where thund'rous surges ever seethe and swirl
'Neath jutting cliffs their white, relentless streams,
Where, midst the midnight mist's unceasing whirl,
A crescent moon its pallid radiance gleams,
Within the wondrous garden of my dreams
A goddess fair bestowed on me a pearl.

"'Until thy dying breath, preserve,' she said,
'This amulet!—It holds a secret charm
Thy body to preserve from peril dread
And sudden death. 'Twill fend thee from all harm!

¹ *Baba Yaga*, a witch.

“‘The futile gift of wealth and sordid gold
Or vain, resistless might ’twill not bestow,
’Twill not through endless leagues to realms of old
Thy body bear on pinions white as snow.

“‘But lo! When lustrous eyes with false delight
And witching spells thy reason seek to move,
When, in the midmost hours of secret night,
Lips cling to thine in lure of lying love—
From yielding then to Circe’s serpent charm
My talisman shall fend thee from all harm!’”

PUSHKIN.

On the morrow consternation reigned in the palace,
and despair wrung the heart of Ilya.

The door of the dungeon was open, the Titan had
escaped. More lamentable still, Princess Vasilissa had
vanished!

V

A SLAVIC CIRCE

As o’er the wind-swept steppe Ilya quested his lost
bride, above the mist-blue horizon he discerned mighty
mountains, their serrated summits rising like a giant
stairway. The nearer glittered like emeralds, the far-
ther, like tawny breasts of Tartar maids, and beyond, a
purple mantle bordered with ermine, towered a stainless
dome.

This Ilya knew was none other than Kasbek, monarch
of mountains. Doffing helm he made obeisance, then
pursued his journey.

Gaining the foothills he entered a deep defile. A torrent weltered between beetling cliffs. The trail wound a yawning abyss, beneath which glittered the torrent, a thread of silver.

Of a sudden, rounding the cliff, Ilya beheld, a wondrous castle lifting golden towers into the azure sky.

Tamara

Where foams the Terek fiery
Through Dariel's gloomy pass,
There looms a lonely eyrie
Amidst the mountain mass.

Within this far-flung eyrie
There dwells a damsel fell,
Tamara, lost Valkyrie,
Heaven-fair with heart of hell!

At night her beacon golden
Gleams down the valley far,
The stranger to embolden,
Like some bright shining star.

And rife with amorous pleading
Her sweet voice doth invite,
The reckless pilgrim leading
With lure of strange delight.

Charmed by her lyre immortal
None may her wile withstand,
Till noiselessly her portal
Opes by a hidden hand.

Bedight with jewels shining,
Couched in a downy nest,

Romance of Russia

For secret trystings pining
Tamara waits her guest.

With smiles and tears and kisses
And strain of breast to breast,
With fond, forbidden blisses
Love's flaming ardours pressed.

Thus lie the lovers willing,
Bereft of very breath
In love's delirium thrilling,
Heedless of looming death.

But when the dawn's rose fingers
Put off the veil of night,
Only lone silence lingers
Above the castle white.

Only the Terek flowing
In fury breaks the hush,
As swift her waters glowing
Beneath the castle rush.

A figure white and slender
Floats down the weltering swell:
In accents fond and tender
Tamara cries "Farewell!"

Her voice is rent with sorrow
Serene and passing sweet,
As if, upon the morrow,
The tryst she would repeat.

LERMONTOFF.

Above the foaming Terek towered the castle like
eagle in eyrie. While he halted in enthrallment Ilya

beheld a fearsome sight. From beneath a tower, of a sudden a body fell into the stream. It tossed from side to side as in anguish, but whether corpse or living Ilya could not know.

He sprang from his steed, peered over the precipice, seeking a trail, but the body swept down the tide and vanished from view.

No whit daunted, Ilya but resolved to pursue his quest.

Presently he perceived the hoof-prints of a charger, so huge that he doubted not they were those of the Titan's shaggy grey. Pressing forward he approached the drawbridge. Summoning the *dvornik*¹ by a blast on his horn, Ilya demanded speech with the giant.

A servitor took the message and, returning, bade Ilya welcome. Through a massive portal he entered a goodly pleasance abloom with fragrant flowers. Plashing fountains murmured while in the thicket trilled myriad nightingales. A lovesome maiden conducted Ilya to a robing room. Other maidens yet more lovesome unhasped his armour and led him to a perfumed bath. Refreshed by his ablutions they dighted him in a robe of samite, girt with a jewelled baldric.

"Not in such guise would I fain meet my foeman," protested Ilya.

A rill of laughter pealed from the maidens.

"Here waiteth no foe, gentle Knight, but a faithful

¹ *Dvornik*, porter or gate keeper.

friend," quoth the most lovesome. "Many suns have set since the master departed, and our mistress pineth for lack of love."

Ilya would fain have further questioned, but that a herald came from the chatelaine demanding his presence.

In the great hall, beneath a brodered dais, lay Tamara, fondling a loathly dragon.

Dazzled by her beauty Ilya stood in amazement. With languid grace Tamara rose, her robe swirling about her sumptuous limbs. She kissed his hands, caressing with them her ivory breast and rose-red cheeks.

"Beloved," she cajoled, "long have I waited thy coming. Fain would I weary thee with many words, but first to the banquet-hall for an hungry guest is a sorry listener!"

Whereupon Tamara led him to the oaken board, whereon were set all manner of toothsome viands: a peacock in its prideful plumage, the head of a boar, the hump of an auroch, fish, and game in profusion.

Silent servitors brought fruit and sugar viands, pouring the while honeyed mead and good green wine.

When Ilya had feasted to his heart's content the sorceress wove her white arms about him in a long caress. Stealthily her hand stole to the cup, whether scattering poppy seeds or weaving an incantation Ilya could not divine.

"Drink, goodly Youth," she smiled, "of the wondrous draft of forgetfulness!"



"Beneath a brodered dais lay Tamara, fondling a loathly dragon to her heart."

By Frank C. Papé

From the *Russian Story Book* by Dr. Richard Wilson, permission MacMillan & Co.

But in her eyes lurked a light so malign that Ilya, foreseeing treachery, feigned to drink. Nodding over his cup he simulated drunkenness, murmuring endearments.

Whereupon the enchantress led him to a chamber dight with tapestries wherein was woven the legend of Circe. A couch of walrus overlaid with down of swans invited repose. Lamps of fragrant oil shed a soft glow o'er Kirghiz rugs on the marble pavement.

"Rest while I pillow thine head on my breast!" she murmured, striving to lead him to the couch.

Ilya surveyed her with a glance of ice. Then the siren perceived that she had to deal, not with a drunken fool, but with a sober foe. Embracing his knees she whimpered:

"Wherefore, stone-hearted, dost scorn my love which princes have sought in vain?"

Thereupon Ilya took from the magic purse the talisman. Then far away there came to him the voice of Lada singing:

"But lo, when lustrous eyes with false delight
And witching spells thy reason seek to move,
When, in the midmost hours of secret night,
Lips cling to thine in lure of lying love—
From yielding then to Circe's serpent charm
My talisman shall fend thee from all harm!"

In vain the enchantress covered his ears and strove to draw his face to her rose-red lips.

"Fear not" she pleaded, "Vasilissa is here no longer.

This morn, ere dawned the sun, the Titan departed with her!"

"Thou liest!" cried Ilya, albeit he feared lest she spake the truth.

"Nay, I lie not. Nathless needs not haste. Take thy heart's content of love. On the morrow I will speed thee to thy vengeance!"

Ilya flung her off with a curse.

Tamara sank upon the couch, then struggled vainly to rise. Of a sudden the couch turned and, shrieking with terror, she fell down a gaping pit!

Marvelling on the fate he had escaped, Ilya peered down. Black as death yawned the abyss while beneath roared the waters of the Terek.

Then he heard the voice of Vasilissa calling wistfully his name.

With a bound he leaped from the casement! In the court he witnessed a marvel. The castle had suffered a transformation. Its marble walls were but blackened ruins. The bright pleasance and lovesome maidens had vanished. All had been but glamoury! Only a whinny broke the hush; Cloudfall, the faithful, waited without the gate!

Through the ruin sped Ilya like a devouring flame. He searched from crypt to turret, but no trace of Vasilissa could he discover. But in the mire he found a trampled rose, still fraught with perfume. Picking up the blossom, he caressed it with his lips.

Of a sudden white hands twined about his neck as with a joyous cry Vasilissa nestled within his arms.

VI

THE CENOTAPH OF DOOM

Day and night and yet a day they rode across the endless, wind-swept steppe. Whether the time were long or short Ilya knew not, till he came to Mother Dnieper weltering in her spacious bed, in full spring flood.

Good steed Cloudfall recked better than his riders and ambled northward along the river-bank questing lordly Novgorod. As thus they rode they came at length to a narrow defile. On one hand boiled the flood, on the other loomed the beetling wall of a cliff.

Of a sudden an avalanche thundered down, sweeping in its path boulders and trees!

In the nick of time, Ilya reined Cloudfall back as the rocks plunged into the river. Gazing upward he beheld the ugly face of the Titan peering over the precipice.

"Come on, cur," cried Svyatogor "and meet the death of a dog!"

With that he gathered up a mighty boulder; but while he stood, arm uplifted, Ilya cast a shining dart! Even as a shooting-star flashes through the night so darted the javelin straight to its mark. Through the giant's shoulder it pierced and quivered in the earth beyond.

Then Ilya assailed him with his blade, gashing great furrows in his hairy hide. Whereupon the giant strained him in a long but unloving embrace.

Even as a wood-cutter saweth the bole of a sturdy pine, so sawed Ilya the throat of the monster. With a sudden thrust the Titan sank his dirk in his foeman's breast.

Then all was dark, and death descended upon Ilya.

The Titan turned and gripped Vasilissa in his hairy hands!

"Lo, thy bridegroom lieth but carrion," he sneered, spurning Ilya with his heel. "An thou stirrest hand or foot thou shalt lie with him forever in that bloody bed!"

"Better death than life with thee!" cried the maid.

But even as he lay aswoon upon the bloody earth did Ilya thus beseech the white-armed Goddess:

"Lada, giver of bountiful life, grant me strength to rid Holy Russia of this spawn of darkness!"

Thus prayed stout-hearted Ilya, and the white-armed Goddess vouchsafed him his prayer. Of a sudden Lada came upon a cloud, and hovering over breathed into his every fibre triumphant strength.

Leaping upon the monster Ilya drove his blade through the magic corselet!

Forthwith the giant was seized with a mighty trembling. Seeing that he had to reckon not with a mere mortal, he released Vasilissa and fled.

The maid went white and swayed dizzily.

"Thou art over-wearied, Beloved; seek we straight-way shelter, food, and rest!"

Lifting her in his strong arms close folded to his heart, Ilya bore her toward what seemed a *dascha*¹ hard by on the open plain. But drawing nigher, to his discomfiture, he discerned that this was no dwelling but a mighty cenotaph of stone.

Graven on the coffin-lid he discovered this strange inscription:

Whomsoever hath destiny smitten
In this coffin is fated to lie.
Whomsoever it fitteth, 'tis written
Himsoever is destined to die!

"'Tis the cenotaph of doom," he cried.

Even as he spake Ilya was ware of a mighty rumbling. The wide wind-swept plain quaked and rocked and the air was rife with wrathful rumour. Of a sudden out of the clouds fell a dark shadow, and standing before him Ilya beheld the Titan.

Spake the Giant: "Behold, Little Brother,
Lie we each in our turn in the tomb,
For whomever it fits and no other
Shall the death-dealing gods grant his doom!"

Then Ilya, deeming no evil,
Laid him down in the cenotaph vast,
When the crafty and treacherous devil
Strove the lid on the casket to cast.

¹ *Dascha*, peasant's hut.

But swift as a shaft from a bowman
Ilya sprang from the sepulchre wide;
And, evading the stroke of his foeman,
Thrust the on-rushing Titan inside!

Whereupon with a mighty downheaval
The coffin-lid closed in a trice
And imprisoned the terrified devil
In the jaws of a murderous vise!

He struggled and strove without ceasing
The lid of the coffin to raise,
But despite all his efforts releasing,
The cover held fast to its place.

"I stifle!" he groaned, "Little Brother,
In mercy my agony save!
Lift the lid lest forever I smother
In the pitiless gloom of the grave!"

But to him answered Ilya heartless,
As he fastened the coffin-lid fast:
"Farewell loathly demon of darkness,
Holy Russia hath radiance at last!"

ANCIENT BYLINA.

VII

EX TENEBRIS

When Vasilissa beheld her lord safe and unscathed,
tears of joy welled in her great, grey eyes. Lovingly
she laced her white arms about his sturdy neck in blithe
embrace. Long time they lingered thus a-dream with

bliss. Nor may hearts know greater happiness in the ever-during race of men.

And behold, as sharing their content, ever more gently blew the balmy south wind. The spring sun melted the ice in turbulent Mother Dnieper. Lo, winter was past, flowers broidered the good, green earth, and air was rife with song of myriad birds. Throughout the endless steppe the noise of growing green things was heard and the forest was fragrant with scent of countless blossoms.

Then appeared Lada, Goddess of Love, uttering winged words:

"Hearken, goodly Hero, who didst renounce godhead and dwell on earth to rid anguished humans of the demon of Darkness. Long time shalt thou dwell in Holy Russia with thy loving Vasilissa in bliss unceasing ere thou shalt again attain immortality!"

Groping for her mist-hemmed robe, Ilya questioned:

"Who art thou, Wonder-Maid, with blossoms white
Twined in the golden aura of thy hair,
With shining raiment weft from filmy air
And wistful smile and eyes of sapphire bright?
With thine approach long days of dead delight
Again revive, with sudden life aglow;
The laden heart shakes off its weight of woe
And joyous leaps with youthful laughter light."

Then murmured the voice of Lada from the cloud:

"A stranger-guest sent from a blither sky!"

The maid replies with merry twinkling eye,
“Thy thirsting lips a cooling draught to bring,
The pure, ambrosial cup of healing peace,
To purge thy fevered soul of all disease,
A little stranger-guest! Men call me Spring!”

PLESHCHEEV.

Thus speaking, white-armed Lada floated heaven-ward in a cloud and vanished utterly.

INTERLUDE

Lifting his sightless eyes, as though he beheld that transcendent vision, out-stretching gaunt arms to clutch the flowery robe of the goddess, the bard stood entranced, then, of a sudden striking his *balalaika*¹ in crashing discord, toppled and fell!

Stout, moujik arms entwined about the minstrel lifted Arkady to his feet.

"Give me to drink!" he muttered, "Give me to drink! Bylina-singing is a thirst-giving task. No *kvas*,² but good green wine or the liquor of drunkenness (vodka)!"

Generously they plied him with brimming flagons, which the bard quaffed at a single draught. Gathering his *caftan*³ about him he made as if to leave.

A roar of protest rose from the moujiks.

"Night is still young!" they shouted. "Sing, sing, till dawn light our homeward way! Wouldst that we stumble in the darkness and perish in some loathly ditch?"

"The ancient gods are long syne dead, Little Children, what would ye have me sing?"

¹ *Balalaika*, the Russian equivalent of a guitar.

² *Kvas*, a fermented beverage made of barley and honey.

³ *Caftan*, a cloak.

“Sing of those Elder Heroes,” they clamoured, “demi-gods, yet men like ourselves! Sing of the Vikings who sailed from the Northland to land-locked Ladoga, and, mingling their blood with ours, gave us their ruthless blood-lust! Sing too of the roving Tartar horde.

“The dusky race that came,
And passed like a scarlet flame.”

“Sing, we beseech, of those ‘sad, forgotten, far-off things!’ Matters not what—but sing!”

Thereupon Arkady sang of the valiant Vikings, Rurik the Red, Oleg the Just, and Princely Igor. Then he sang the far-flung glories of Prince Vladimir, who welded the warring, Slavic tribes into a solid chain, bringing from Tsargrad¹ the new faith of Christ, so that no longer dwelt his subjects a “dark people” but became torch-bearers and spread the flaming faith through “Holy Russia.”

¹ Byzantium, Constantinople.

CHAPTER II

THE SPARROWS OF YAROSLAVNA

I

THE COMING OF THE BERSERKS

(VIKING SONG)

Hark! the stormy petrel cries!
Lash the helm and reef the sail!
Lo, dread Odin from the skies
Frees the furies of the gale!

Sunset flames gleam red as blood—
Forkèd tongues of lightning flash—
O'er the tide's tempestuous flood
Thor's great thunders sudden crash!

Lo, dread Odin from the skies
Frees the furies of the gale!
Hark the stormy petrel cries!
Lash the helm and reef the sail!

NADSON.

AT the head of his festive board sat Prince Igor, boasting lustily. First he vaunted the virtues of Vladimir his valiant son. Then he vaunted his Viking sire, Red Rurik, that bold Berserk who in his high-beaked dragon-ship first sailed to far-flung Russia. Long syne had the wild Valkyries borne him to cloud-vaulted Valhalla. The Viking's fame was like faded

arras, 'gainst which gleamed Igor's greater glory and the dawning splendour of Vladimir.

Well might that profligate princeling forget the rude warrior who carved the way to house him safe in high-walled Kief-town. Wherefore, Igor bade the scald sing his father's praise, vowing the while that the son would give him food for a future lay.

Forthwith smote the bard his lyre till it wailed like a tempest. The walls re-echoed with the roar of lusty throats singing as sang the Berserks when with the lord of Rovers they embarked in their great Sea-Dragon, gleaming with a hundred shields—

Seventy ells and four extended
O'er the sea the vessel's keel.
High above it, gilt and splendid
Rose the figure-head ferocious
With its crest of steel.

His tusks shining, a ruby gleaming in his ear, Rurik stood at the helm. A grizzled beard fluttered from his weather-bronzed cheeks. A scarlet mantle flamed on his brawny shoulders. His eyes flashed and his sinewy hands clutched the helm with a grip which boded mastery o'er man or gale.

At command of the Thunderer, a tempest assailed the Vikings. Above loomed billows like snow-clad mountains, and jade-green valleys yawned beneath. In the ebon skies galloped ever the tireless steeds of

Thor, driving the unwitting Berserks over the weltering waters.

Thus sailed they o'er the black Baltic, laughing and looting, fearless of god or devil. Raping and burning, they ravished hamlet and croft, till after manifold venturing they reached the tranquil shore of Lake Ladoga.

Forthwith Rurik beached his weary dragon and staunched the wounds in its oaken hide. Embarking anew, the Berserks descended lake and river till they came to the white walls of Novgorod. Here at length they settled, ruling the savage Slavs who hailed them heartily.

Whether through foeman's steel or o'er much wassail sayeth not the scald, Rurik the Red soon forsook white-walled Novgorod for the high-halls of Valhalla. But ere he embarked on that long journey, he committed his son Igor, to the wardship of his trusty comrade Oleg. Closer than brothers were they, sharing daily hardships and infrequent joy. Passing love of women was the affection they bore one another. When Rurik desired lovesome Lyusha, daughter of the Lord of Novgorod, albeit he loved the maiden more than life, Oleg renounced her for love of his brother Berserk. He might have ruled Russia but, true to his trust, he trained the youthful Prince to subjugate the turbulent Slavic tribes.

Far and wide he conquered, building mighty strong-

holds and lofty towns. Everywhere he made alliances till at length his domain extended from the ice-bound Baltic to the sun-kissed Southern Sea.

From Byzantium came Greek priests and builded them high-domed chapels. Scant heed gave Oleg to this strange cult. The faith of his fathers was sufficient to the rude Berserk though he scoffed at Valkyries. They were only women! Rather did he lavish his affection upon the charger that bore him o'er the wind-swept steppe in quest of grim adventure.

Thereupon the minstrel struck his *gusly*¹ in praise of the steed, singing the while.

The Lay of Prince Oleg

With bloody spur and lance in rest,
Aflame with ruthless ire,
Prince Oleg rides with bristling crest
To rapine, raid and fire.

From out the forest's grim array,
Wasted with years of pain,
A dread enchanter, old and grey,
Beside the Prince drew rein.

"Rede me," quoth Oleg, "ancient Seer,
My fortune, good or ill!
And rede it sooth—nor ever fear,
Requite thee well I will!"

"The future years are dim and dark,"
The aged Seer doth cry,

¹ *Gusly*, lyre.

“Yet on thy forehead fair I mark
A wondrous destiny!

“On proud Byzantium’s golden gate
Thy buckler bright is hung,
Thy name shall ring in deathless state
On man’s immortal tongue!

“Both land and sea thy throne obey;
Nor hero’s dauntless sword,
Nor dastard’s knife hath power to slay
Nor thwart thy idlest word!

“Thy steed obeys thy lightest breath,
Nor fears for thee to bleed;
But, natheless, thine untimely death
Shall come from thy good steed!”

Prince Oleg smiled, but on his brow
There lurked a frown of pain;
He spoke his charger soft and low
And stroked its silken mane.

“Farewell, dear comrade, brave and tried,
Of steeds most strong and fleet.
Henceforth on thy sleek ebon hide
No man shall take his seat!

“Farewell,” he cried, “my charger good,
Henceforth in freedom dwell!
The greenest grass shall be thy food,
Thy drink, the clearest well!”

And straightway from the Prince his steed
The squires did drive away;
And swift unto the Prince did lead
Another destrier.

Romance of Russia

The Berserks wassailed blithe and gay,
The mead-cups clashing bright,
They boasted of a bye-gone day
And feats of bloody fight.

“But where,” cried Oleg, “is my steed?
How fares my trusty friend?”
“Beneath the mosses of the mead
He slumbers without end!”

“Liar!” quoth Oleg, black of brow,
“False prophet, but for thee
He might have borne me until now!”
Then hied he forth to see.

Prince Igor at his bridle rode,
By Dnieper’s turbid tide,
To where—within a bosky wood—
The gallant charger died.

The Prince espied his courser’s skull.
“Sleep! Faithful Friend!” quoth he.
“Thy lord’s own days are well-nigh full—
Soon he will rest with thee!”

From forth the skull a serpent sprang
On sudden to the light,
And round the Prince with venom’d fang
Enlaced its lethal might!

.

The Berserks wassailed blithe and gay,
The mead-cups clashing bright,
And boasted of a bye-gone day
And feats of bloody fight.

PUSHKIN.

II

THE MEETING

A maiden culled a flowery spray
Within the fragrant glade;
A youthful princeling rode that way
And thus bespoke the maid:

“God greet thee, merry Tartar maid,
Fair as the rosy spray.”
“Thanks, gentle Knight,” the maiden said
Blushing like lustrous day.

“Shall I a riddle ask thee, Maid?”
Thus questioned her the youth.
“Aye, ask thy silly riddle, pray;
I’ll answer it in sooth!”

“What is more tall than highest hill?
More bright than brightest day?
What thing is thicker than the night?
What thing is never still?
And what is past all mortal sight?”

“Higher than mountains shines the Moon,
Brighter than day the Sun!
Thicker than night the stars of June,
Ne’er still—a woman’s tongue.
And past all understanding still
Man’s ever-changing will!”

“The riddles all, my merry maid,
Thou hast divined aright;
Wherefore to me, within the glade,
Thou shalt be wed tonight!”

BUSLAEF (Moscow Song).

Thus sang the minstrel as taking up his harp he resumed his tale.

The high-beaked dragon ships lay beached upon the strand of turbid Dnieper beneath the white walls of Kief-town.

On the neighbouring steppe, within a *kibitka*¹ the chieftains of the warring races, Norse and Tartar, were assembled in conclave.

For the lad, Vladimir, these bronze-skinned Polovsts held a potent spell.

Beyond yon shimmering birchwood was pitched their forbidden camp! Quickening his footsteps he breathlessly climbed a knoll.

Beneath, like a toy village, stretched the camp, its tents ranged about a grassy pasture, wherein grazed nomad steeds. All was tranquil, for the warriors had gone to the Council and the women to the river, where they were belabouring their raiment, chattering ceaselessly the while.

Konchakovna alone stood before her kibitka, tossing grains of millet to a cloud of garrulous sparrows.

The Viking youth strayed nigher.

A brodered caftan revealed her round, sun-browned arms, and shapely shoulders. As the Tartar maid scattered the golden grain Vladimir felt he ne'er had beheld so fair a picture.

Surprised but unafraid, the maiden smiled upon

¹ *Kibitka*, a Tartar travelling tent.

the timid lad, murmuring a greeting in an unknown tongue.

Albeit the youth wotted not her speech, full well he understood her smile, and the bowl of *kumyss*¹ she so courteously proffered. Stretching at her feet he quaffed the liquor at a draught, his eyes gleaming gratitude.

The maiden's eyes bespoke delight, for the youth was unlike any she had known. Golden ringlets, skin white as milk, and eyes twin sapphires! She fingered his strange leathern doublet, and eyed curiously his elk's hide sandals.

Vladimir drew from his wallet a Norse coin which he offered bashfully.

Konchakovna accepted the gift graciously, then gave the youth a little idol of jade. Thereupon they touched foreheads gravely and were friends.

The while the sparrows settled upon Vladimir, pecking impudently in his apparel in quest of millet. Of a sudden, screaming with fright the flock fluttered off!

Looking up Vladimir beheld creeping stealthily along kibitka, a leopard! Licking its chops it eyed the youth with coals of fire.

Calmly filling the bowl with *kumyss*, Konchakovna called the great cat. It sprang to the ground and lapped avidly, fawning at the maiden's feet. A silver collar girded its neck, from which depended a chain. This Konchakovna made fast to the door-post.

¹ *Kumyss*, fermented mare's milk.

The pard purred contentedly and rolled upon its back as she stroked it fearlessly.

"'Tis but the cub of Gazak," she smiled, "which sitteth ever on the saddle-bow when that his master rideth to the hunt!"

Entering the tent Konchakovna returned forthwith, bearing a balalaika. She touched the strings in a slumbrous rune. The leopard yawned, then closed his great green eyes.

"Baby, great cat-baby!" she laughed, extending the lyre to Vladimir.

Striking the chords to a ringing drinking song, he stamped the ground with flying feet!

With an infuriated snarl the leopard crouched to spring!

"Softly, Kasbek!" commanded the maiden. The leopard cowered as Vladimir sang a love-song.

"Slowly the sunset fires die out
Behind the distant forests dark,
Night spreads her veil upon the earth
In mystic shadows,
Dim and blue,
Leading my feet to my Love!
Dost thou await me Beloved?
Answer the cry of thy lover!
My heart is consumed as by fire.
Wilt thou soon come to me, Sweet?
I wait for thy coming, O Love!"

"Teach it me!" besought Konchakovna, and, nothing loth, Vladimir re-echoed the lay. Lovesomely

blended their voices the while tremulous fingers interlaced o'er vibrant strings. Perilous sweet was the touch as they whispered the old sweet tale. None hearkened but the leopard who, flaming with jealousy, gnawed his slender chain. Of a sudden a link snapped and the brute won free!

With a bound he leaped upon the maid and sank his claws in her throat!

Vladimir drew his poniard and struck. Over and over they rolled, rending and striking in lust of blood.

Again and again the poniard struck, then at last the great cat relaxed grip and toppled at the feet of the maiden!

Raiment rent, limbs streaming gore, Vladimir smiled triumphantly.

Of a sudden the forest resounded with the tramp of arms! The boughs parted and, encircled by his guard, Khan Konchak faced them frowning.

Tremulously his daughter recounted how the stranger had accomplished her deliverance.

Silently the father hearkened, smiling knowingly the while. When the maiden had finished he greeted Vladimir heartily:

"In sooth a red-blooded lad art thou to have thus spent thy heart's blood in defence of my daughter. Thou shalt remain ever with us as surety of thy nation's faith!"

Seeing that the Tartar would fain hold him, Vladimir

flamed with indignation. He spurned the proffered hand and with a bound plunged into the forest.

As in the Dragon ship he sailed for high-walled Kieftown, he beheld Konchakovna waving her apron in farewell.

III

THE VAUNT OF PRINCE IGOR

I sing the deathless deeds of heroes dead,
Who in dim, distant days, mid dangers dire,
Their reckless legions 'gainst the Polovst led.
Brave Vladimir, Knight of the sunrise red
And doughty Igor, his Varengian sire.

Within the hall balalaikas rang,
They quaffed the good, green wine with rousing toast,
And when the feast was o'er, the minstrels sang,
And Igor, great of heart, began to boast.

"Fain would I slake my burning thirst," he cried,
"Upon the sweet red wine of Polovst blood,
And from my helmet drink with lustful pride
The wine-dark waters of Don's turbid flood!"

Across the wind-swept steppe Prince Igor rode,
With multitude of men in vast array,
Unto the confines of the Golden Horde,
By Don's dark tide one memorable day.

Upon the mountain crags the wolf did roar,
The eagle screamed within its eyrie lone,
Black vultures overhead did hungry soar,
Lusting to pick the reckless Russian's bone.



"As Vladimir sailed away in his dragon-ship Konchakovna waved a blithe farewell."

By Frank C. Papé

From the *Russian Story Book* by Dr. Richard Wilson, permission MacMillan & Co.

By dark, untrodden ways in dead of night
Like gaunt, grey wolves the Polovsts softly crept,
With muffled drum and stealthy footstep light,
Unto the camp where sound the Russian slept.

From day's first roseate dawn to even shade,
Through ebon night to morn's faint roseate light
They fought—Like lightning-bolts their lances played,
And sullen thunders roared as, blade on blade,
Their sword-strokes clashed in unremitting fight.

Two days they rained with arrow, lance and sword
Their ceaseless flame of unrelenting hell,
Upon the third when sank a blood-red sun
The shattered standards of Prince Igor fell.

But when the Polovsts rallied on the hill,
Prince Igor drank the bitter vintage red
Of Death's relentless wine his utter fill
That fateful evening when he turned and fled.

Above the wind-swept steppe the falcons sweep,
The flowers have withered on the thirsty plain,
But those stout hearts who 'neath the grasses sleep
From Death's dark night shall ne'er awake again!
PRINCE IGOR'S ARMAMENT.

Igor had vaunted he would give the scalds food for a lay. Full well did he fulfil his boast on that evil day he led his legions 'gainst the Polovsts.

He had dispatched heralds to his brother Vsveleod, lord of Royal Novgorod, bidding him assemble the Slavonian warriors on the banks of the Don. As Prince Igor surveyed this innumerable host, his heart

swelled with overweening pride. Natheless dispute arose betwixt the chieftains whether 'twere better to take the Polovsts by surprise or rest their wearied steeds over night.

Thereupon Vladimir dared all ride to a night attack.

Albeit the foe had been warned and feigning terror abandoned their encampment. Thus while the warriors rode from tent to tent lading the loot, the guileful Polovsts bided the hour to strike.

Of a sudden whilst the Russians little recking of harm were disputing over the booty, the foe fell upon them like a whelming flood.

Raising the wounded Vladimir from a heap of slain, Khan Gazak, binding him to his saddle-bow, led him off like a captive steer.

As the warriors of Prince Igor lighted their morning campfire, the Polovsts suddenly surrounded them like a forest of steel. Galloping about their victims in a circle, they loosed their venomed shafts the while ever and anon new horsemen took their places.

In vain did Prince Igor strive to align his scattered troops, so sore beset were his men scarce had they time to don harness. Moreover the oriflamme was lost, so that none might guess whither to rally. Casting off hauberk that all might behold his countenance, bestriding his white charger, Igor led his broken cohorts to the fray. Unhorsed, his sword broken, still he fought wielding his mighty gisarm.



“Above the wind-swept steppe the vultures sweep,
The grass has withered on the thirsty plain
But those brave hearts, who 'neath the grasses sleep,
From Death's dark night will ne'er awake again.”

By Vasnetsov (V.M.)

Reproduced by permission from *The Russian Arts*, by Rosa Newmarch. Herbert Jenkins, Ltd., London

The while his poltroon brother deeming defeat certain incontinently fled, nor stayed till he gained the walls of Novgorod.

Whereupon the Polovsts charged upon their prey. Whereafter was no longer battle but a bloody rout. Of that numberless host which departed from the bank of Don, returned to princely Kief but a sorry score.

Thrice wounded, at length Igor yielded him to Konchak, who received his submission full knightly wise, staunching his wounds and setting him upon his steed.

The welkin rang with shawm and psaltery as the victors returned leading their train of captives. At the head rode Khan Konchak, grim and imperturbable despite the plaudits of the mob. Behind him rode Prince Igor with bowed head but dauntless eyes. Thereafter followed Khan Gazak dragging the wounded Vladimir, cursing his captor who, turning in the saddle, lashed the defenceless youth with his knotted knout.

In the train of Khan Gazak marched a thousand fighting men. Unnumbered steeds, sheep, and kine roamed the steppe herded by his numberless serfs. An hundred hamlets bore him tribute, he bowed as vassal only that he was suitor for the Khan's beauteous daughter, Konchakovna.

As the triumphant warriors returned, the Princess and her maidens came forth to greet them. Thus they sang:

"Hale and victorious
Warriors come back!

Deathless and glorious
Hail great Gazak!
Sound wide the victory,
Timbrel and psaltery!
Hail War-lord, hail to Thee,
Dauntless Gazak!

“Countless thy horde did rove,
Wolf-like a pack,
Ruthless in war and love,
Loot, flame and sack.
Sound wide the victory,
Timbrel and psaltery!
Hail Wolfing, hail to thee
Ruthless Gazak!

‘Waste fields and shattered stones,
Lone hamlets black,
Strewn with white Russian bones,
Lie on thy track.
Ring the great victory
Round the wide sapphire sea;
Hail War-lord, hail to thee,
Whirl-wind Gazak!’”

BORODIN (PRINCE IGOR).

Vladimir eyed the Princess loweringly. His heart flamed as she lifted to Gazak a beaker of golden mead.

Slaking his thirst in a single draught the Chieftain returned the empty flagon.

Torn with ruth at the captive's plight, Konchakovna refilled the cup and smilingly raised it to his lips. Thirstily Vladimir drank, his anger fading the while he quaffed as avidly of the Polovst maiden's eyes.



“Creeping from beneath his slain comrades Vladimir broke his blade in token of surrender.”

I. Bilibin

From a government edition of *bylinas* and *skazki*

Days passed—Gazak and his warriors set forth anew to the fray, bearing bane to the very walls of Kief-town.

Meanwhile Khan Konchak entreated his captives more as guests than prisoners, granting them leave to hunt upon the wind-swept steppe. What harm, he questioned, could befall Konchakovna in galloping with the youthful Vladimir o'er the open plain? What harm that they swim Don's swift waters or murmur love-songs while the log burned low?

Mayhap the doting father marked with not unkindly eyes his daughter's favour for the goodly youth. Howbeit, whether the Khan's eyes were blinded or no, scant heed gave he to the serenade as with wailing balalaika sighed the amorous lad.

"Fade the sunset embers golden
O'er the slumbrous forest sweet,
'Neath night's azure veil enfolden
Fly to thee my footsteps fleet.

"Dost thou yearn for me Konch'ovna
As for thee my soul is rent?
Hearken to thy anguished lover,
Come to me, my heart's content!

"I shall wait thy long-longed coming
'Neath the starry summer sky.
As the wild-doves swift are homing,
Come to me—else I shall die!"

BORODIN (PRINCE IGOR).

Lightly lay captivity upon the love-lorn Vladimir; but his father chafed thereunder like a prisoned lion

when tidings came that Gazak would return forthwith bearing Princess Yaroslavna as concubine.

No longer could Igor bide, bound by ties of honour, he sought his son, counselling thus:

“Make ready for flight! The warriors sleep the sleep of drunkenness! Beyond the river wait steeds. Like ermine steal we through the reeds, like leopards spring we on our steeds, and like falcons cleave the shades of night!”

Albeit the father pleaded on behalf of his spouse the lad, torn betwixt love of mother and love of sweetheart, yielded but unwilling obedience. He first craved leave to bid Konchakovna farewell.

Thus sang the youth his song of parting:

“Glowing embers gleaming bright,
Flashing sparks on high.
Sheltered in the silent night,
Bid me, Sweet, good-bye!

“On my breast thy silken head
Then, beloved, lay!
Gone the days, too swiftly fled.
Kiss me, sweetheart, pray!

“In the morn, with dawn’s first glow,
O’er the road to rove,
Must I with another go,
Quitting joy and love.

“Who can tell what unknown hand,
With to-morrow’s tide,

Will unloose the knotted strand
Thy dear fingers plied?

“Glowing embers gleaming bright,
Flashing sparks on high.
Sheltered in the silent night,
Bid me, Sweet, good-bye!”

POLOVSKY.

Konchakovna clung convulsively to her lover's breast.

Till dawn the father vainly waited his son, then fled alone. Love had triumphed!

IV

THE CHURCH OF THE BLESSED SPARROWS

“When cometh Gazak,” faltered Konchakovna, “thou wilt pay dearly for thy love!”

“Let us flee forthwith to Kief,” returned Vladimir.

“Nay, prithee, not to Kief! To a refuge in the south-land. A lone church that none frequents albeit the door standeth ever open. There none shall seek us for folk tell 'tis haunted by spirits. By night will-o'-the-wisps gleam within and strange chants echo through its empty aisles.”

All night they fled and at dawn beheld a golden-domed chapel glistening in the sunrise.

In the doorway stood good Priest Innocent, shading eyes with palm.

"What temple might this be?" queried Vladimir, "for of a surety, it is the abode of some great god. If he be powerful as his temple is glorious his faith will I accept."

"Blessed be these aged eyes!" the Pope¹ rejoiced. "Two score years served I this altar but till this day no worshippers have ever entered the portal save the sparrows. They are my converts. For them have I daily filled the font, repeating the holy office of baptism the while they flutter therein. Verily, not one of these fall to earth without His knowledge!"

Beneath the golden Iconostasis² knelt the fugitives while the good priest blessed them with the holy sacrament of the Wedding Crowns.

There they dwelt for a year in the lone mission, aiding Father Innocent to till his fields and scatter their harvests to his feathered parishioners.

Thus they lived content and unmolested, but, not undiscovered.

Far and wide had Konchak quested. He loved the young falcon, as he dubbed Vladimir, and would fain have made him his son. When after many days he discovered the truants, he reproached Konchakovna lightly; as bidding farewell to the bride who leaves her father's roof.

¹ Pope, Russian designation for village priest.

² Iconostasis, the Rood Screen enshrining the Ikons or religious paintings.

The Moth

Why, thou reckless little devil,
Dost abandon home and mother,
And unthinking aught of evil,
Thus forsake them for another?

There no trouble e'er oppressed thee,
There no care thy joy did smother.
Cares were made for moaning pine-trees,
Bitter grief for forests lonely,
Trouble for the wailing night-breeze,
Sad complaints for wild waves only.

Like a leaf within the wild-wood,
Like a moth you fluttered over,
On the frail wings of your childhood,
To the bright flame of a lover!

KALEVALA.

"Little moth," he smiled, "dwell in hiding till the flame of Gazak burneth out! Thereafter will I make covenant with Prince Igor that our races become one people even as ye twain are now as one!"

V

THE TREE OF ANCHAR

In the wastes of the limitless desert,
In the sands of the sun-burned sod,
Grows the doom-dealing tree of avengement,
The gift of a pitiless god.

The womb of some venomous devil,
In travail and bitterness dark,

Gave birth to this offspring of evil,
With its pitiful branches stark.

At noon, when the sun flameth torrid,
Floweth forth in a turbulent flood
From the heart of this Upas-tree horrid
A torrent of poisonous blood.

Nor ever a bird of the sky on
This treacherous tree-top will light;
And ever the blood-thirsty lion
Doth shrink from its shade in affright.

If ever the cloudlets of even
Their dews o'er its summit distil
The bountiful zephyrs of heaven
Are transformed to a whirlwind of ill.

Yet natheless a potentate wary
His minion dispatched from afar,
Who roved o'er the limitless prairie
To the treacherous tree of Anchar.

Next morn he returned to his master
With a countenance pallid with dread,
And bodeful of looming disaster
His limbs were all bloodless and dead.

On his brow icy sweat-drops were gleaming,
Unavailing he strove to find word;
Bloody froth from his lips sudden streaming,
He fell at the feet of his lord!

Then the chief in the slave's red oblation
His swift-footed arrows did steep,
To send to a neighbouring nation
Their message of doom-giving sleep.

PUSHKIN.

Khan Gazak was ware of this bodeful sapling and dispatched a serf in search of its venomous blood. For months he quested till at last he discovered the tree of doom. Tale telleth that albeit the slave guarded the deadly poison in a sealed casket, he perished in agony at the feet of his ruthless lord.

Thereupon in the serf's heart's-blood did Gazak steep his arrows, harrying the Prince till the venomous shafts dealt their doom and Igor fell smitten with death.

Scant respite had Gazak, for Yaroslavna took the field in her lord's stead. In vain had she striven to suck the venom from Igor's wound. Its fell potency must needs have entered her blood, for the loving wife was transformed forthwith to an inexorable Amazon.

Surprising her by stealth Gazak summoned Yaroslavna to surrender. Her answer was a blow of her gisarm which cleft the chieftain's skull; and while his body-guard gaped in amaze, the Amazon galloped off.

Upon their lances, the Polovst warriors bore the body to camp and buried it beneath a great mound, the while with wailing and rending of raiment they chanted:

A Dirge of Avengement

Chorus of Warriors

Rise my friends, with holy zest,
Grasp the sword with ruthless wrath,

Plunge it in the Russian's breast!
Take the bloody Tartar path!
Glory to us, death to you,
Allah hu, Allah hu!

Semichorus

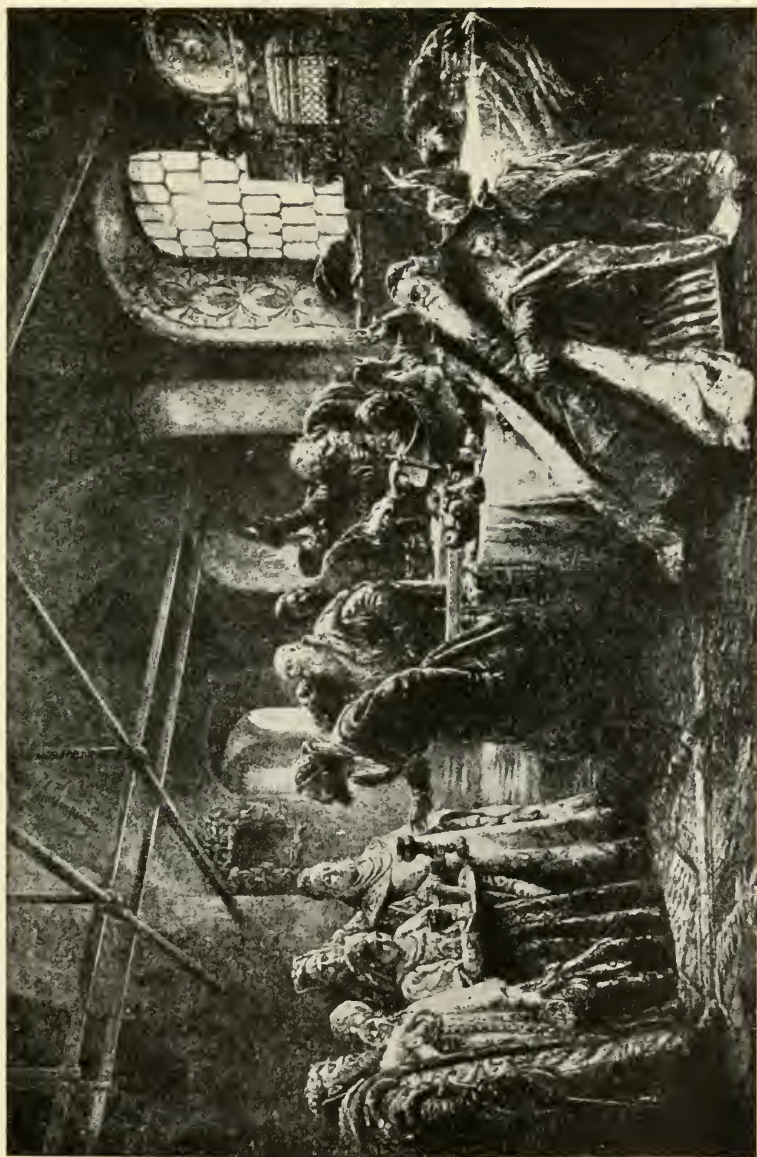
Weep ye maids on knoll and plain,
Weep your fallen warriors brave!
We have fought our fight in vain,
Elberus grants us a grave.
Never more the pipe's soft sighs
Shall release our souls from pain,
Never more your love-lit eyes
Shall rejoice our hearts again.
Ours the tempest's lullaby,
Ours the warlock's weird refrain!

Second Semichorus

Weep not maidens! Through the skies
Lo! the houris, like a wave,
Swiftly soar to Paradise
Bearing souls of warriors brave!
Toast ye, men, their glorious name
Tartar death is deathless fame!

First Semichorus

Roar ye torrents, foam and roar!
Fallen lies the first-born dear,
Lonely Mother, bent and hoar,
Sit not at the threshold drear;
Dry thine eyes and grieve no more,
Seek him not nor vainly weep;
'Neath the steppe's tall grasses sere
Thy brave son doth gently sleep!



The Betrothal

By K. E. Makovski, permission Art and Archaeology

Second Semichorus

Weep not, Mother, as a flood,
Still my heart beats strong and free,
And is turned to lion-blood
That mild milk I drew from thee;
For our stainless Tartar fame
I, thy son, have guarded well,
Battling with the powers of shame,
Azrael called me and I came.
Fadeless flowers from my fresh blood
Shall arise with fragrant breath,
To my children giving good,
To my foes revenge and death!

Chorus

Rise my friends with holy zest,
Grasp the lance with ruthless wrath!
Plunge it in the Russian's breast,
Take the bloody Tartar path!
Glory to us, death to you!
Allah hu, Allah hu!

BESTUZHEV.

Many moons waxed and waned ere Khan Konchak dared propose his plan for a truce. At length, however, he unfolded the design that had long been ripening in his mind.

"I am old," he pleaded, "and have no son. When I die, make Vladimir chieftain and thus unite our warring nations!" This the Polovsts promised and dispatched to Princess Yaroslavna a treaty of alliance.

Refusing to believe that her son still lived, Yaroslavna

conceived a dire design. Well she knew that drawn by scattered grain, sparrows followed the Polovsts, building nests on their kibitkas. Feigning to accept the offer of alliance of the Khan, she demanded as pledge of his good faith that he send her a brace of sparrows from the eaves of every izba.

Far and wide through the land of the Polovsts was gleaned this curious tribute; and laden with the feathered hostages an hundred wains wended to white-walled Kief-town. Whereafter the treacherous plot of the Princess was made known.

To the tails of the sparrows Yaroslavna caused to be fastened wisps of flaming tow. Then the birds were loosed bearing death to their erstwhile abodes. In the sheep-skin roofs the flames swiftly spread, each tent setting fire to its neighbour, till the wind-swept steppe was a sea of flame!

From the mission terrace Vladimir and Konchakovna witnessed the conflagration in consternation. All night long meteors shot across the heavens. They flashed over the ebon firmament in a rain of upward-falling stars. They showered upon the roofs of the terrified Polovts the brands of a holocaust!

“What does it mean?” demanded Konchakovna in terror.

Of a sudden the feathered flame-bearers converged toward the church. They struck their anguished wings against the dome, then fell a mass of charred plumage

upon the pavement. Throwing wide the portals, the pope admitted his parishioners who, fluttering into the sanctuary, quenched their flames in the font. Not alone were the brands powerless to harm the holy edifice but its winged choristers found deliverance.

"Verily," chanted Father Innocent, "the sparrows have found their abode, even thine altar, O Lord of hosts!"

"Holy Father, grant us likewise thy baptism," besought Vladimir, leading Konchakovna to the font, "if so be thou deemst us worthy!"

Tears welled in the good priest's eyes.

"Of a surety," he murmured, "is it not written: Ye are of more value than many sparrows!"

Thus when valiant Vladimir came into his own he brought to Holy Russia the greatest boon, the faith of the good Lord Christ.

Amid wondrous rejoicing the heathen idol, Perun the Thunderer, was cast into the Dnieper, and a glorious temple consecrated to the new god, Christos.

Even ruthless Yaroslavna was at last softened. In penance she made pilgrimage to Tsargrad, where, in the cathedral of Saint Sophia, she was christened by a name she bore so worthily that to this day the peasants worship her as Saint Olga, to whom "much was forgiven for that she loved much."

Alas, not long dwelt Princess Konchakovna in white-

walled Kief-town to bless her beloved lord. In his arms she laid a babe, then, like a blossom uprooted from the steppe, swiftly faded.

The Church of the Blessed Sparrows stands today a ruin in a wilderness. But ever and anon, a Cossack kneels beside its altar ere he whets his blade for a foray 'gainst the hated Tartar. Far and wide mothers still tell the tale of the sparrows and sing the cradle-song Konchakovna crooned to the babe of valiant Vladimir first Christian Tsar of Holy Russia.

Cossack Cradle-Song

Sleep, my little flax-haired fairy,
Fold thine eyes in sleep!
Silver moonbeams, bright and airy,
O'er thy cradle creep:
I will sing to thee a story
Of the peaceful deep;
Close thine eyes in dreams of glory,
Sleep, my baby, sleep!

Hark! The Terek dark and foaming,
Welters through the glade,
Where the Kirghiz in the gloaming
Whets his bloody blade;
But thy Father, brave in battle,
Guards thee from all ill,
Cease thy silly infant prattle,
Hush, my babe, lie still!

Bitter days shall soon befall thee,
Peril will betide—

On a charger fleet and fiery
Swiftly shalt thou ride,
And a silken saddle peerless
I for thee will keep.
Sleep, my little Cossack, fearless!
Sleep, my baby, sleep!

When I think, my blood-begotten,
Soon a Cossack true,
Thou wilt leave thy home forgotten,
Bid me last adieu;
Ceaseless through long nights of sorrow
I will wail and weep.
Tranquilly until the morrow,
Sleep, my baby, sleep!

Breathlessly I'll wait thy coming
While long days drag by,
Praying for thy speedy homing,
Fearing thou wilt die;
Fearing thou wilt grow a stranger
To my longing deep—
Sleep, my fair-one; free from danger,
Sleep, my baby, sleep!

Thee I'll give an image holy
'Gainst all dire dismay;
To it, faithful, kneeling lowly,
Fold thine hands and pray!
It shall keep thee safe in battle
While I wail and weep.
Hush thy silly infant prattle,
Sleep, my baby, sleep!

LERMONTOFF.

CHAPTER III

THE TRUTH TELLER

I

HOW THE GOOD KNIGHT DOBRYNYA BABBLED IN HIS CUPS

LONG, long ago, in dim forgotten days, there dwelt in the wind-swept steppes beyond Mother Dnieper, the valiant youth Dobrynya, knightliest prince of Holy Russia. Stalwart was he, inured to hardship, dauntless of spirit, albeit gentle, and withal kind of heart.

Natheless since the high gods bestow upon no mortal all good gifts, him they denied wealth, and craft. Wherefore, though Dobrynya loved full well to boast, naught could he speak save sooth, the which proved oft his undoing.

Upon a time he made journey across the far-flung plain to the land of Lithuania, finding favour with its Tsar, who made him his royal equerry.

It fortunèd one day that his daughter, the Princess Nastasya, beheld Dobrynya mount his rearing charger and forthwith her heart quivered like the good knight's steed.

"Marry," quoth the princess, "yonder rideth a man! Tell me, whence he cometh and what his name!"

"Dobrynya, The Truth Teller," answered her father, "goodliest knight of Holy Russia."

Upon the eve the Tsar held a feast. Summoning Dobrynya in secret the Princess pleaded:

"Go not, I pray, to the banquet! Thou wilt drink o'er much of the good green wine and thereafter boast, wherewithal shall hap thy misdoing!"

Albeit he was grateful, despite her warning, Dobrynya attended the festival.

When all had feasted to their hearts' content, and were well drunken, the guests began to boast. Many vaunted their valiant steeds, the Tsar his wise old mother; but Dobrynya bragged of the Princess and the bliss of love.

"S'death!" cried the Tsar, "such lying liketh me ill! Bind this braggart to his steed and send him forth to perish on the steppe!"

So the guards did as commanded, and overwhelming Dobrynya after a lusty struggle bore his seeming lifeless body from the hall.

As they were binding the good knight to his charger, who should pass in her golden litter but the Princess Nastasya, foreboding some secret doom.

"Hounds!" she commanded "release this goodly youth! Lo, here is treasure!" heaping palms with roubles. "Get ye to the nighest pot-house, seize some accursed Tartar, and sever his turbulent head! Thereupon bear it to the Tsar, saying his bidding is accomplished!"

Nothing loth the guards departed, having loosed the good knight from durance who, more dead than alive, blessed the Princess for his deliverance.

“Go, Braggart!” she smiled, lifting him to the saddle, “but boast no more concerning me!”

After weeks of wandering Dobrynya came to white-walled Kief-town. Fair Sun Vladimir¹ held high festival with his *bogatyrs*.² About the oaken board they sat, feasting and quaffing the good green wine.

Filling a beaker with the wine of joyfulness, Vladimir caused it to be borne to Dobrynya.

Albeit it held a bucket and a half and its weight was more than a *pood*,³ the good knight drained it at a draught.

“Well quaffed!” laughed the Sun-Prince “thou art in sooth a man!”

Filling with honey-mead the horn of an auroch, he proffered the cup to Dobrynya. As before the good knight drained it at a draught.

Whereupon Fair Sun Vladimir filled a flagon with the vodka of drunkenness. This also Dobrynya quaffed at a single draught.

Whereat, of a sudden, his eyes flashed, his tongue was loosed, and folly flowed from his mouth!

¹ Fair Sun Vladimir forcibly converted the Russian people to Christianity in 986.

² *Bogatyrs*, knights.

³ *Pood*, forty pounds.

"Well mayst thou vaunt thy sweetheart" mocked Vladimir, "but I, alas, am unwed. Knowest thou a damsel fit to be my Queen, lofty of stature though comely and lithe of limb, haughty as a peacock, albeit timid as a hare, fearless as a falcon, and gentle withal as a swan? Tell me good knight, knowest thou such in Holy Russia?"

Whereupon Dobrynya thus bespoke his royal master.

"Fair Sun Vladimir, Shining Light of Holy Russia, such and even more is the beauteous Princess Nastasya, daughter of the Tsar of Lithuania. Nay! such surpassing loveliness dwelleth not in the whole white world!"

"Ai!" smiled the Prince scrabbling his beard, "methinks thou art thyself enamoured of this jade!"

Dobrynya abased his eyes.

"Howbeit," laughed Vladimir, "thou shalt woo me this damsel!"

Whereat Dobrynya repented sorely of his boasting.

"Sire," he pleaded, "I possess not a guileful tongue wherewith to woo a maid."

The Prince pondered.

"Take thou then a host of forty thousand, treasure to thy need, and this signet ring!" commanded Vladimir.

Whereupon the good knight made answer:

"Two fair and lovesome daughters hath the Tsar, albeit the elder, Nastasya, is even as I have said, she is no fitting mate, Great Prince, for thee. For like an

Amazon she rideth ever o'er the steppe in quest of warlike venture. But the younger daughter, Princess Apraxia, is a womanlier maid, biding at home, the while she weaveth brilliant broidery. Sweet is she as honey from the comb, and gentle withal as a dove!"

"Verily," quoth the Prince, "the younger is more fitting. Seek her and with thee take Aloysha, the pope's son, for he hath a guileful tongue. But an the damsel will in no wise be wooed, bring her by might, since in sooth thou hast a stout right arm!"

II

A PROXY WOOING

Next morn, with a goodly retinue, Dobrynya set forth from white-walled Kief-town across the open plain.

After manifold journeying, they came to the land of Lithuania. Throned in state the Tsar received the embassy who on bended knee presented their missive.

The Tsar rose.

"'Tis not fitting," he said, "that elder daughter be set aside for younger, wherefore shall Nastasya wed the Prince."

"Nay," protested Dobrynya, "folk tell she hath the temper of a shrew. Would not Princess Apraxia be a fitter bride for my royal Master?"

Nastasya flushed scarlet: "Who dare thus speak of me?" she demanded.

Dobrynya held his peace for he was sore at heart.

"Of a surety," he said within himself, "the Princess might have seen I spake unfaith to save her for myself."

"Varlet, tell thy Master," cried Nastasya, "I would not wed him were he the only Prince in the whole white world!" and gathering her skirts swept haughtily from him.

"For a lifetime have I prayed I might wed Fair Sun Vladimir," murmured the guileful Apraxia.

Whereat the Tsar bade bring the great *bratina*.¹ Thereupon Dobrynya drained the draught, bestowing upon the Princess a kiss in his lord's stead.

Marking how the cheek of Nastasya flamed, Aloysha whispered: "Lada hath reserved for thee a lustier lord!"

Then to the Tsar he pleaded obsequiously:

"Suffer, Gracious Sovereign, that Princess Nastasya bear company with her sister to the Kingdom of Vladimir!"

Whereupon declared Nastasya scornfully, "Weary unto death am I of men and their loathly wooings! Lo, I go a roaming in quest of loftier adventure!" and turning her back upon all she quitted the chamber.

Across the endless wind-swept steppes rode Dobrynya and the Princess Apraxia journeying to royal Kief-town.

"Good Knight," quoth the Princess, "for thy ser-

¹ *Bratina*, loving cup.

vice in gaining me a kingly husband fain would I requite thee with love, but that thou bearest me scant affection!"

"Thou art affianced bride of Prince Vladimir," protested Dobrynya. "'Tis not meet thou shouldst call me more than friend!"

As he spake he was ware of a Knight in Tartar mail who barred the narrow way.

"Aloysha!" he cried, "take thou the Princess and bear her in honour to our Fair Sun Prince the while I battle with this accursed heathen!"

Whereupon the Tartar set lance in rest and charged, smiting manfully upon his helmet.

Despite the shock Dobrynya but sat his steed the more firmly:

"Methought a gnat was biting me!" he sneered.

Whereupon, leaping from their chargers, the two champions fought with mace and sword.

Lithe and nimble was the strange knight. Oft did his sword-thrusts bite through Dobrynya's mail, but the Russian had the stronger arm and a mightier sweep of blade, which might well have cleft his opponent's skull had not the latter evaded swiftly, dancing about his slower antagonist, so that when he aimed a stroke, this will-o'-the-wisp of a sudden attacked from the rear, and Dobrynya's arms fanned the air like the vans of a mill. Albeit he was at no time grievously wounded in body yet his spirit was sore angered.

Sweat streamed from every pore as he fumed and cursed his tormentor.

At last his strength stood him in good stead, as with a swift stroke he sent the Tartar's scimitar flying, and gripping breast-plate rent it from body. When he beheld his foe defenceless, Dobrynya scorned to slay but demanded:

"Tell me, presumptuous Tartar, thy name that I put it in the boasting-song my bards shall sing!"

"Braggart!" taunted the Tartar, "I will set my palms 'gainst thy head and press thee till I make an oat-cake!"

Thereupon waxed Dobrynya exceeding wroth, and would fain have slain him forthwith but that of a sudden his heart softened for he perceived that he was about to strike the breast of a woman.

"S'dearth!" he cried, "no man art thou but a *polynitza*!"¹

"*Durotchka*!"² laughed the damsel, "knowest me not? Albeit, thou didst boast Nastasya's love, not me didst thou choose but Apraxia. Men may swear but only a woman keepeth her vow. Wherefore will I press thine head 'gainst my bosom, and tell me, sweet oat-cake, if I press too strong for thy liking!"

Thus speaking Princess Nastasya clasped him to her breast and fed hungrily upon his sugar lips.

¹ *Polynitza*, warrior-maid errant in quest of adventure.

² *Durotchka*, little fool.

III

GHOSTS OF THE STEPPES

Leaden clouds delirious driven,
Snow-flakes falling, frail and white,
From the livid, moonless heaven—
Grim and fearsome looms the night!

Faster speeds the sledge and faster
While the sleigh-bells tinkle bright;
Eerie peals of ghoulish laughter
Shrieks the wind mid tree-tops white.

“Swifter speed the sledge!” “Nay, Master,
Useless 'tis to ply the goad,
The spent team can go no faster,
Wearied with its heavy load!”

Vaster loom the clouds and vaster,
Shrouding all the misty skies;
While the wolves, in our disaster,
Ring us round with hungry eyes!

Lo! One leaps with goblin antic
In my face with ghoulish hiss!
See! It goads the chargers frantic
Forward to the deep abyss!

In the gloom, like spirit evil—
Cowering low behind a tree,
Eyes agleam—a fiery devil
Bides his time to spring on me!

Leaden clouds delirious driven,
Snow-flakes falling frail and white,
From the livid, moonless heaven—
Grim and fearsome looms the night!

Sudden halts the team in wonder!
 Silent fall the sleigh-bells bright.
 Look! What crouches over yonder?
 Wolf or shrub beneath the night?

How the birches writhe and shiver.
 How the wind doth wail and scream.
 See, beyond the ice-bound river,
 Sneering fangs with evil gleam!

“Look! one leaps there! Hasten, driver!”
 Forward speeds the frenzied team,
 See, with what Satanic laughter
 Now the flock around us stream!

Like the restless waves of ocean
 Countless, ceaselessly they fly,
 Whirling on in endless motion
 Like the leaves of autumn sky.

Like the coursing clouds celestial
 Still they come with ceaseless cry,
 Is it some mad, maudlin festal,
 Or a death-dance coursing by?

Leaden clouds delirious driven,
 Snow-flakes falling frail and white
 From the livid, moonless heaven—
 Grim and fearsome looms the night.

Ever troop the phantoms faster
 In a carnival of death,
 And their shrieks of dread disaster
 Freeze my blood with icy breath!

PUSHKIN.

O'er the endless steppe fell the frail, white snow-flakes. Gaining a lone izba, by dint of chaffering, Dobrynya persuaded the moujik to sell horse and sledge. Yoking their steeds, with one hand he lashed the *troika*¹ while with the other he clasped Nastasya close. Thus right blissfully sped they o'er the wide, white steppe.

Scarce had the wayfarers travelled a verst when they were ware of an ominous roar, presaging peril! Of a sudden the troika halted and with distended nostrils the steeds fell all a-tremble.

"Wolves!" shrieked Nastasya, as through the flying flakes they saw a living sea surging swiftly toward them. Anon for a moment the howls would cease, then anew the leader would wail. Again the pack would rend the welkin with a cry proclaiming that, having scented its prey, 'twould ne'er give o'er the chase till it had slaked its thirst in gore.

They came closer, the padding of their feet could be clearly discerned, as through the flakes gleamed their laming eyes; Dobrynya lashed frenziedly.

"Up, ye bags of grass!" he shouted, "ye lazy hounds, ye horses' hides stuffed with uselessness! For what are ye fed save ye should outrun all upon legs!"

Whereat the resentful steeds galloped lustily. In a trice the pack was left behind; naught could the wolves discern save a cloud on the distant steppe.

¹ *Troika*, team of three horses.

Natheless the wolves relinquished not the chase, and, as the troika wearied, inch by inch, the pack gained on its quarry.

“Fear not, Beloved!” heartened Dobrynya, “behold them slink affrighted to their lairs!”

Loosing a horn from his caftan he blew a lusty blast! The whole, wide steppe resounded as with thunder, but to his amaze the wolves displayed no fear. Redoubling their efforts they pursued still more ruthlessly.

Then wailed Dobrynya in dismay:

“Yonder be not good Christian wolves, but the hounds of Satan, who hath transformed himself into a werewolf to accomplish our destruction!”

Whereupon he lashed the steeds more furiously. But the spent team could scarce drag the sledge. Out of the darkness sprang a wolf! Leaping upon the troika it sank its murderous fangs in the leader’s throat. The charger staggered, then fell.

Placing Nastasya behind his back, Dobrynya bared his blade as the pack surged forward. But drawing a poniard, the warrior-maid battled valiantly. Long thus they fought, lunging, slashing, and stabbing, flinging the corpses to the hungry pack.

At last, wearied unto death, Nastasya sank to the floor of the sledge.

Dobrynya stood over her battling ever but with heart like lead.

Of a sudden the werewolf leaped upon Nastasya!

With a sword-stroke Dobrynya cleft its head, baring the skull to the bone.

Again the werewolf sprang! Again the good knight struck but his blade rebounded as from armour. The demon grazed his throat and the blood gushed forth. It slavered his cheeks with its loathly tongue and its lamping eyes burned to his very soul. Feeling his strength ebbing, with a supreme effort Dobrynya lifted his cross-hilted sword.

“Jesue Khriste,” he faltered, “come to mine aid!”

Of a sudden, trembling with terror, the demon cowered before the cross. With a howl the werewolf vanished! In its place stood a gentle creature like unto a great grey dog.

“Mount upon my back,” it spake with human voice, “and I will bear thee safe to white-walled Kief-town.”

Whereupon Dobrynya bestrode the good wolf who trotted docilely through the forest, Nastasya galloping after.

IV

HOW THE GOLDEN CROWN WAS TO ONE BRIDE A GLORY AND
TO THE OTHER A CROWN OF SHAME

The Bride's Glory

The goldsmith beats his anvil free
And plies his hammer merrily—
“O gentle goldsmith forge for me
A Diadem of Glory!



“Whereat Dobrynya bestrode the good wolf who trotted docilely
through the forest, Nastasya galloping after.”

I. Bilibin

From a government edition of *bylinas* and *skazki*

“A great tiara, bright and new,
A gleaming ring, pray make me too,
And golden brooch of ruddy hue,
Good goldsmith, for my Glory!

“The glorious crown I’ll proudly wear,
On gleaming ring my troth will swear,
The brooch shall bind my golden hair,
Good goldsmith, forge my Glory!”

(Folk-song.)

Cathedral bells pealed a glad refrain as the long-lost lovers rode into the sheltering city, where with Fair Sun Vladimir and Princess Apraxia, good knight Dobrynya and warrior-maid, Nastasya, took the Golden Crowns.

The double wedding accomplished, they repaired to the palace where were assembled all the bogatyrs and beauty of the kingdom. Sumptuous indeed was the feast which the bountiful Prince provided. An army of servitors dispensed toothsome viands and the good, green wine flowed like Mother Volga in unceasing wassail.

Many were the songs sung and the toasts drunk to the bliss of the double couples.

Natheless in this joyous throng were two ill content. In sooth, the Tsaritsa Apraxia, who loved but little her devoted lord, and Aloysha Popovitch who, albeit unwedded, pursued each new kirtle were it maid’s, wife’s, or widow’s. Ever roved his lustful eyes, but ever returned from their roving to glut their gaze upon the Princess Nastasya.

Whereat Dobrynya, glowering, drank deeply. As he quaffed beseemed he beheld graven on his beaker this inscription:

“Beware to sip too oft my sugar lip, lest I loose thine inmost thought!”

Thereupon Dobrynya ceased drinking, lest he should shame his brother knight.

But the treacherous Apraxia smiled the smile of Circe as she turned stout-hearted Ulysses to a swine, murmuring seductively the while: “Drink, Beloved, for in wine lie love, laughter, and truth!”

“’Tis for this cause I drink not,” quoth Dobrynya, “lest I dub thee the loathly name thou meritest!”

Then the Tsaritsa scorned more than erst she had loved Dobrynya and frowning turned her back.

Whereat Aloysha deeming the fruit ripe for plucking, did murmur in her ear some secret gallantries.

“Wouldst win my favour,” again the Circe smile, “slay first this witless truth-teller for in sooth his silly virtue turneth my stomach!”

“An I do this mur—, this trifling service,” he faltered, “wilt thou cozen the Sun Prince to grant me Nastasya to wife?”

“That will I gladly,” pledged the Tsaritsa, “natheless first make her a widow!”

Now it fortun'd soon thereafter that Fair Sun Prince Vladimir made yet another feast to do honour to his

dauntless heroes and warrior-maids. Natheless the false knight Aloysha sat not amongst them.

When they had drunk the good, green wine and feasted to their hearts' content, Aloysha entered. Kneeling before the throne he kissed the feet of Fair Sun Vladimir, then cried:

“Foolish are ye Russian heroes, thus to linger quaffing the wine of drunkenness the while the accursed Tartar with fire and scimitar layeth waste our smiling izbas. Is there none will take up the gauge and do battle with the champion of the Golden Horde? Is there none will defend the Holy Faith 'gainst the shameless pagan?

Nevertheless none answered the challenge, each holding his peace awaiting his neighbour.

Then spake Fair Sun Prince Vladimir, “Lo, we will dispatch Dobrynya, for in sooth throughout Holy Russia there be not his equal in valour or in might!”

Whereupon all agreed that the good knight be sent on the quest.

Then sought Dobrynya his saintly Mother, lamenting thus:

“On what doomful day didst thou give me birth, *Matyushka*¹, that to me the high gods have withheld comeliness, riches, and a beguiling tongue? What lofty deity have I offended that I should be fated thus to

¹ *Matyushka*, little mother.

wander through Holy Russia shedding blood and bringing tears?"

Whereupon his saintly mother made answer:

"Fain would I have endowed thee, son of mine, with fortune, beauty, and guile, but to thee, alas, the high gods have granted only valour unceasing and a truthful tongue!"

Thereupon she led forth his beloved Nastasya, murmuring the while!

"My sun setteth full soon behind a forest, but behold! this fair, white moon shall light my gloom!"

Then clung Nastasya to his stirrup, lamenting bitterly:

"How long, beloved lord, will thou wander ere thine handmaiden behold anew the light of thy countenance?"

"Three years shalt thou wait," he made answer. "Whereafter, an the high gods decree I still remain among the living, then of a surety shall I come to thee! But an they destine I shall die, live thou a widow, lamenting me not, or wed again with a goodly knight! But wed not the lying knave, Aloysha. Swear by this cross!" he commanded, handing her his hilt to kiss.

Thereat Nastasya made answer: "All men may swear but few do keep their vows, wherefore will I not swear a man's oath, but upon thy sugar lips a vow that shall not be broken, the vow of a woman's love!"



“Across the endless wind-swept steppe Vladimir, Aloysia, and the Warrior Maid vainly quested Dobrynya.”

Vaznetsov

From *Russian Heroes, Saints, and Sinners*, and *Sinners*, by Sonia E. Howe, permission Williams and Norgate, London

V

MY STAR

For thee my heart is longing
Through lonely years,
In mists of memories thronging
Thy visage peers.

Thy face, forgotten never,
Looms from afar,
Elusive, radiant ever,
Like some bright star.

TYTCHEV.

Thus sang the lonely wife weaving the while Runic interlaces at her lofty loom. Long years had waned since her beloved lord had departed across the far-flung steppe, but still patiently she waited.

On a day came Aloysha bearing evil tidings, who thus treacherously besought the faithful wife:

"Far and wide have I scoured the open plain vainly questing thy lord, till at last in the sands of desert I discovered a prostrate body. Dismounting from my steed I bent over the lifeless form. Ai! alas! It was none other than the good knight Dobrynya. For weeks had he thus lain; in his curls the falcons had built their nest, having plucked his eyes from their sockets. Still o'er the endless steppe roameth his riderless steed, the while his erstwhile wife pineth ever a lonely widow. Wherefore, sweet bird, bethink thyself if it were not fitting to take another mate!"

"Get thee gone, deceiver! Thy tale is false!" protested Nastasya. "Thou ne'er hast quested the open plain, for in sooth thy raiment is void of dust!"

Days flowed into months and months into years like the ceaseless turbid tide of Mother Volga. For six long weary years Nastasya waited, but tidings had she none.

On a day Fair Sun Prince Vladimir entered her white-walled palace, and with him came Aloysha.

"Obdurate woman," protested the sovereign. "Wilt forever continue to bewail thy lost lord? Lo, for six long years his body hath lain the prey of wolves and vultures upon the endless wind-swept steppe. Ai! alas, that the brave knight went to his account ere he had bequeathed thee a son. Mother of God! shall the race of warriors perish utterly from Holy Russia? Prolific Princess, it behooveth thee to bestir thyself and breed us up more heroes! Wherefore, I do bid thee wed the knight Aloysha else will I immure thee ever in a convent of barren nuns!"

Thereupon Nastasya besought Prince Vladimir with winged words:

"Fair Sun Prince, three long years did I wait according to the vow I swore my beloved lord. Thereafter yet three longer years did I wait of mine own free will. Lo, a man's oath and a woman's have I kept, but fain would make another. Prison me if thou wilt in a convent. In twelve years and my lord return not, set me free. Albeit Aloysha, the pope's son, will I wed never!"

Whereat the scorned suitor waxed exceeding wroth:

"By the beard of Perun! Wench!" he thundered, "thou shalt wed with none save me!"

But Nastasya only laughed and shook her haughty head.

Years passed but the fair Princess remained ever faithful to her long-lost lord. When that the full term of twelve years was accomplished, one morn the while she gazed wistfully from her convent tower, Nastasya beheld a fleet of saffron-sailed galleons on Dnieper's turbid flood. As they cast anchor in the harbour she marked that their prows were blazoned with the crescent moon of Tartary.

Now even as she gaped in dumb amaze, Fair Sun Prince Vladimir and Aloysha entered the convent gate.

"Beloved Princess," smiled the monarch, "his highness the Great, Grand Khan of Tartary hath dispatched hither an embassy to demand thee in wedlock!"

"Wherefore, sweet Nastasya, wed me forthwith, that thou fallest not into the hands of this accursed pagan!" murmured Aloysha amorously.

"I will wed with none!" retorted Nastasya tartly.

Whereat Prince Vladimir did wax exceeding wroth:

"Baggage," he cursed, "an thou weddest not ere the morrow, I will sell thee a slave to the Tartar Khan!"

In vain with tearful pleading Nastasya besought the Prince to relent. To her piteous appeal the obdurate tyrant turned but deaf ears.

Whereupon, perceiving that naught would avail 'gainst his relentless will, Nastasya yielded and suffered Aloysha to lead her to the great cathedral.

Within its incense-scented gloom, beneath the gleaming Ikons, Nastasya took the wedding crown, the while, kneeling in the shadows the sainted mother of Dobrynya smote her withered breast in lamentation:

“Ai! Alas! Mother of God, my shining moon hath now forever set!”

VI

Throughout the moonlit steppe the weary eyes
Of all God's world were wrapt in silent sleep;
All stillness was within the woodland deep,
Only a far-off heron's plaintive cries
And murmurs light of drowsy dragon-flies,
Winging enlaced amid the lonely night
The silence broke with glint of darting flight
And lilt of laughing elfland melodies.

Within the velvet dusk a snake, inlaid
Like gleaming damascening on a blade,
Writhed through the grasses, coiled into a ring
And hissed its lethal tongue as if to spring;
Then swift, as if impelled by mortal fright,
Vanished within the shadows of the night!

LERMONTOFF.

Meanwhile taken captive by the Khan of Astrakhan, it fortune'd as they led forth Dobrynya to his dungeon that the witch, Morena, daughter of the serpent, be-

held the misfortunate knight and enamoured of his comely mien resolved to win his love.

Full many heroes, princes, tsars, and serfs innumerable had the Baba-Yaga slain; nathless, moved to ruth, the heart of the witch was softened so that by dint of enchantment she transformed herself from a loathly dragon to a white and lovesome swan.

Thereupon the swan-maiden conjured from the ground the footprints of Dobrynya and flung them into a fire chanting the while:

“Burn! Burn ye footprints of Dobrynya! and as ye burn may thus his heart inflame for me!”

Of a sudden a strange fire burned the breast of Dobrynya. Naught might he eat or drink by day or night neither did sweet slumber refresh his wasting body. Thereupon did the Khan take pity upon his woeful captive and commanded he be loosed from his dungeon. Whereat the good knight became boon comrade to the Tartar potentate who suffered him never to quit his side.

It chanced on a day that they hunted in quest of the kingly tiger.

“Rest thou here,” quoth the Khan, “by the marge of this tranquil lake, the while I hide in yonder jungle! Needs must that our quarry come from either quarter, alarmed by our beaters, and that we may of a surety capture him!”

While Dobrynya stood alone at gaze, of a sudden he

beheld in the rushes a snow-white swan. A golden diadem embossed with fair round pearls, gleamed on her head and her plumage glistened like burnished silver.

Forthwith the good knight laid shaft to cord and drawing his stout bow would fain have loosed the arrow.

But with human voice the lovesome swan besought him thus:

“Gentle huntsman, I implore thee, spare thy loving slave!”

And lo! even as she spake her plumage vanished and in the swan’s stead stood a maiden of surpassing grace.

Wildered by her beauty the heart of Dobrynya flamed. Of a sudden, his brain was drugged with the wine of forgetfulness. Striving to clasp her, he fain would kiss her sugar mouth. But the swan-maiden dexterously evaded his onrush.

“Wed me first!” she commanded, “thrice pace with me about yon willow bush, thus will I be thy wife!”

At that word the mist of forgetfulness vanished and a vision of his beloved Nastasya rejoiced his eyes.

“Go thy way, wanton!” he cried, “wife have I, the most virtuous and desirable in all Holy Russia! Get thee hence or I slay thee forthwith!”

Thereupon the lovesome swan-maiden was transformed into a wrinkled Baba-Yaga, who, riding her broom-stick, vanished from view.

Now the Khan, hiding in the jungle, marvelled within himself:

“Beauteous in sooth must be the wife of Dobrynya, since thus he scorns this lovesome maiden!”

When they had hunted to their hearts’ desire, and slain the kingly tiger, they returned to the palace. There having feasted and drunk of the good green wine, the Khan questioned thus:

“Tell me, good friend, of the Princess Nastasya, is she in sooth thy fitting comrade!”

Whereupon Dobrynya vaunted the virtues of his faithful wife. Whereat a fell design flashed into the mind of the Tartar.

“Faithful, vauntest thou?” he laughed bitterly. “Lo, women an hundred have habited my harem, but one such have I never discovered. Lo, twelve long years hast thou been absent from her. Dolt, I will gage thy freedom ’gainst the jade that long ere this she hath been wedded! List! I will dispatch thee to royal Kief-town in my great galley. An thou findest thy wife unwedded thou shalt remain, else come ye both to me!”

And thus it came to pass that o’er the foam-flowered waves sailed Dobrynya glad at heart, for little fear he had of his beloved Nastasya. Then up turbid Dnieper he pursued his impatient way till at last they set anchor beneath white-walled Kief-town.

Whereupon a weary dove fluttered to the deck murmuring with human voice:

“Great is the feasting while the fair widow Nastasya taketh the golden crowns with the false Aloysha!”

Whereat Dobrynya waxed wroth and guised in the raiment of a minstrel hied him to the palace of Fair Sun Vladimir. Unsuspected he entered the banquet hall wherein a host of knights and ladies were drinking the good green wine.

“Fair Sun Vladimir!” he cried, “wilt thou not find me place where I may play upon my golden gusly?”

“Welcome! good bard,” cried the Prince, “there yet remaineth room upon the oven, the minstrel’s proper throne! Sing us, I pray thee, some stirring epic lay!”

Whereupon tuning the chords of his lute, Dobrynya sang from the bitterness of his heart:

A Song of Betrayal

Bright shines the golden summer sun,
But not for me!
My very heart is turned to stone,
Since false is she.

Fate’s deathly pall hath shrouded o’er
My woe-bent head;
Grief rends my breast, and in the core
My soul is dead.

Help have I sought, alone and lorn,
Of all in vain;
None gave me aught but ruthless scorn
And cold disdain.

Then sudden waned to deepest gloom
The gladsome light,
Oblivion closed me in a tomb
The livelong night.

The tempest roused me, in the rain
 I mounted straight,
 Hoping to flee, alas in vain,
 From ruthless Fate!

KOLTSOV.

"Thy song was o'er sad, good minstrel," complained the Prince, "behold thou hast brought tears to the eyes of the sweet bride. It behooveth thee now to drive them forth with a merrier lay!"

Then sang Dobrynya the song of Ulysses, the mighty adventurer, and the while he sang of faithful Penelope oft lingered his gaze on the fair Nastasya, albeit more in sorrow than reproach.

Whereat flame flushed the bride's cheek 'neath her golden tiara and she abased tear-dimmed eyes.

"Good bard," quoth the Sun Prince, "thy song liketh me mightily, wherefore join thou the feast!"

Dobrynya, nothing loth, seated himself near Nastasya, but on the other side of the board. Pouring a beaker of wine he let fall therein his wedding ring, and offered the cup to the bride.

"Drink to the bottom, fair Princess! Therein shalt thou behold thy future fate!"

Draining the cup, Nastasya beheld the ring she had long syne given Dobrynya. Casting off her golden glory she flung it in the face of Aloysha, crying:

"Heroes of Holy Russia, not this false knight is

my wedded lord, but this good minstrel, my long-lost Dobrynya!"

Rising on her nimble feet she vaulted o'er the board, and tearing off the bard's false beard kissed his sugar mouth.

"For that I did not bide thy coming, Beloved, lash me with the knout," she cried, "to the last drop of my heart's blood!"

"A damsel's locks are long," quoth Dobrynya, "but her patience short. A man hieth to the wood-pile, ere he returneth behold his wife hath wed another. Not thee, sweet bride, do I reproach, but this traitor Aloysha, who, well knowing that I still lived, did steal thy love!"

Grasping the bridegroom by the throat the good knight belaboured him mightily. When the last breath was fain to leave, flinging the body beneath the board he spurned it with his heel.

Thereupon replacing on her head the bride's golden glory, Dobrynya lifted her to the table.

With one acclaim the assembled company thronged about the joyous pair. Many the songs that were sung and the toasts drunk to their unremitting bliss, till rosy-fingered dawn touched the birch tops, when amid great rejoicing they led the long-lost lovers home.

Wherefore singeth the minstrel this lay for the solace of all true sweethearts and a warning to false friends and braggart drunkards, lest they fall upon the slippery path of truth.

CHAPTER IV

THE GOLDEN HORDE

*(A Galimatias from the "Perilous Peregrinations" of Messer
Marco Polo)*

The Tartar's Tomb

Within the endless, lone Ukraine,
Neath ever-leaden skies,
There looms a mound upon the plain
Wherein a warrior lies.

Three days they feasted at his grave,
Three nights did drink and eat,
And sacrificed his harem brave
And Arab charger fleet.

But when the last carouse was sung
And drunk the last proud toast,
The bards balalaikas rung,
And thus began to boast:

"Great Khan, fore'er thy flaming name
Shall fire the Tartar host,
Nor will the thunder of thy fame,
Through ages dim be lost.

"Nay, should Kismet thy body give
Beneath the steppe to lie,
Yet still thy deathless soul shall live
Through all eternity!"

But lo! Long moons have waxed betide
And weary years have waned,

And countless races born and died
Where once the monarch reigned.

But still doth rear that massive mound
Its haughty crest on high,
Nor level with the grassy ground
The warrior's dust doth lie.

But through the long relentless years
His "deathless" fame was lost,
And none may know what name he bears
Who led the Tartar host.

What tides of guileless blood he shed?
What tribes he put to flame?
What death he died, what life he led?
Of glory or of shame?

The sphinx-like mound makes no reply,
Across the sultry plain
A frail gazelle goes bounding by,
And wails a lonely crane.

Only the faint cicada's cry
The utter stillness cheers,
As fleeting clouds from out the sky
Let fall unpiteous tears.

ALEXIS TOLSTOÏ.

Foreword

GREAT Princesses, Burgesses, and folk of every degree, pray take this paltry chronicle and peruse it lovingly. Therein shall ye discover all manner of blood-curdling ventures, incredible yet veracious, anent the mighty Khan Batu and his Golden Horde, the ruthless wars he waged, and a certain fair Muscovite captive, whom I, Marco Polo, vagabond voyager, by my



“This is the Noble Knight Marco Polo of Venice, the Great Traveller,
 who describes to us the Great Wonders of the World that he
 himself hath seen, from the rising to the setting sun;
 the like of which were never heard before.”

From *The Book of Ser Marco Polo*, translated by Colonel Henry Yule, permission
 John Murray, London

wonted valour and wit, abetted by my patron saint,
mercifully delivered from that relentless infidel.

The Caravan

A caravan from far Cathay,
A dusty train in dim defile,
Comes winding down its endless way
Across the desert mile on mile.

Swart sheiks on stallions white as snow,
Mad Mullahs, slaves from Samarcand,
And mangy camels lumbering slow
Freighted with wares from distant land.

O merchants, tell us what you bear
Within those chests of teak and jade,
Attar and myrrh and perfume rare,
Or gleaming steel Damascus blade?

O merchants, tell us what you buy
A tithe as dear as what you sell,
Or will the gold of Ophir vie
With your strange freight of fragrant smell?

“A precious jewel is the freight
We carry in our caravan,
A princess fair—the destined mate
Of Proud Batu, the Tartar Khan!”

A houri frail from Paradise,
A moon-pale flower of ghostly rose,
Peers forth, with smouldering love-lit eyes,
Like lamps in dim seraglios.

The caravan winds on amain
Across the sands to far Sarai,
I follow on its endless train
The captive's captive till I die.

(After Hafiz.)

Thus sang long-syne the poet Hæfiz and his lilting love-song echoed in my ears as I leaped aside to let pass a caravan returning from the sack of Kief.

Of a sudden, from a palanquin, a beauteous captive lifted the shutters, disclosing a smile of such piteous appeal that I vowed: were it to death, nay, through the gates of Inferno would I speed to the deliverance of my prisoned moon-flower.

But forsooth I forerun the course of my chronicle. Many the desert verst I was destined to wend ere Kismet vouchsafed me that celestial vision.

Sundry sheets of parchment, pray Heaven not so arid, must ye traverse, patient perusers, ere ye gain the garden of The Golden Horde, there to pluck the precious flower of my romance.

Wherefore, enough of preamble and to the tale with order and despatch.

I

CONCERNING MY ASTONISHING ADVENTURE AT THE COURT OF THE GREAT GRAND KHAN

Genghis Khan lies in the Mountain Altai.
The wild, red Mongol raider Genghis Khan.

The great blue wolf of his fathers howls,
Around his rock-hewn tomb the tiger prowls.
He scourged Aladdin and all Cathay
And drank from Wang Khan's skull, they say.
He ravaged the great walled land of Wang.
Genghis Khan lies in the Mountain Altai
With his four sons, whose names are swords that clang.

WILLIAM ROSE BENET.

Behold me, Marco Polo, in the year of our salvation twelve hundred and thirty-nine, right sumptuously ensconced in the court of the Great Grand Khan at the city of Caracorum in far-flung Tartarye.

Of all the multifarious progeny of the prolific potentate Genghis need we trouble ourselves with but two, to wit: Kublai Khan, Sovereign of Cathay, and Batu Khan, Monarch of Muscovy, of whom more anon.

Bitter contenders were these twain for succession to the Great Grand Khanate. Wherefore, when the all-puissant potentate did summon to his court all the monarchs of Christendom and Heathendom,¹ for the purpose of settling their claims, fearing treachery at the hands of his beloved kinsmen, needs must my illustrious patron, the cautious Kublai, do me the dubious honour to personate his sacred Khanship.

Full wise was the Khan of Cathay not to thrust his holy head into this nest of vipers, for, having scarce

¹ Caracorum in the centre of the Desert of Gobi. Representatives of several European monarchs, the kings of Greece and of France and even a Papal legate responded to this call.

returned to my tent from pleading my master's cause, I was set upon by a band of miscreants. These gentle gentry of the bold Batu would fain have brought to an untimely end the voyages of Messer Marco Polo but that he battled lustily for his paltry life, the while a misfortunate magician sped vainly to his succour. Misfortunate in sooth, since mistaking him for me, they beheaded the guileless wizard, bearing his bloody countenance to their master in token of my murder.

Albeit not all the prowess of this small bickering redounds to my credit, for in the thick of the fray a black-bearded Tartar would fain have slit my weasand with his scimitar had I not out-cried frenziedly: "Holy San Marco, speed to my deliverance!"

In answer to my prayer, the tent hangings parted and bedight in shining mail a goodly knight strode forth and manfully assailed the assassins with his double-bladed falchion.

To such good purpose did my heaven-sent deliverer wield his vengeful blade that he propelled a Mongol's head, as it were a ball, against the tent post, wherefrom it straight rebounded, smiting the remaining miscreants with such consternation that they incontinently fled.

As I gazed in amaze at the gentle face bent o'er me, and marked the twin-headed falcon, blazoned on his shield, I knew this to be no idle vision but a goodly

knight—none other than Alexander Yaroslavitch, most valiant prince of Muscovy.

For it was matter of common marvel how that this Russian falcon braved the Tartar tiger in his lair, traversing leagues of desert to implore the ruthless Khan to forego the ravishment of his country.

“No dog of a Pagan art thou,” laughed the Prince, “but a Christian knight. Wherefore do I pledge thee eternal brotherhood!”

“Ill merit I such honour, a vagabond venturer, roaming the uttermost bounds of earth in quest of flitting fortune. Albeit methinketh, good Prince, a rover’s life is not devoid of savour,—Hearken and I will sing thee a song!”

“Nor farm, nor fief I hold,
Nor home have I.
Heedless, a rover bold,
I live and die!

The miser, worn with care,
Sleeps not all night,
But I in bed may fare
Till noon’s bright light.

Free as the vagrant breeze
Roam where I will,
Piping my minstrelsies
O’er field and hill.

If weary with life’s knocks,
What boots a thing?

I toss my scornful locks
And laugh and sing.

And, if I needs must die,
Why wail and weep?
I'll lay me 'mid the rye
Smiling, to sleep.'"¹

"Brother Wayfarer," smiled Alexander, "thy philosophy liketh me mightily! Wherefore, Messer Marco, let us rove the world together!"

"Right willingly," I assented with a hearty hand-clasp, "and mayhap, Good Prince, thou mayest find the love of a vagabond worthy the proof!"

II

HOW I CAME TO BE MAGICIAN TO THE MIGHTY BATU KHAN
AND IN HIS TRAIN TRAVELLED THROUGH ENDLESS
TARTARY. OF THE DESPOT'S DEVILMENT AND HOW,
BY DINT OF MY WONTED CRAFTINESS, I SKILFULLY CIR-
CUMVENTED HIM.

Now you must know that donning the regalia of the defunct wizard, I robed the cadaver in my cast-off raiment, so that when the Khan beheld me, he little recked how handsomely he had been cozened.

Behold me thence duly accredited Magician of the Tartar monarch, whereat, with my wonted effrontery, I entered the imperial kibitka and salaamed obsequiously before his sumptuous throne.

¹ Nikitin.

Beneath his feet rich rugs, ablaze
With colour pulsed turquoise and ruby lights. A haze
Of violet incense swirled in the silken gloom.
Twelve poles upheld this spacious travelling room
Inlaid with gold and silver. Two hundred cords
Of silk without were stretched as straight as swords
To ebony pegs. Within, beyond the throne
A large couch loomed, crusted with beryl stone
And rumpled rose-silk cloths across it spread.

"Cast mine horoscope, Wizard!" commanded the Khan. "Tell me if 'tis written whether my forthcoming foray 'gainst the Muscovites is fated to prosper or to fail!"

"All-puissant Prince," I answered, feigning to consult my astrolabe, "the configuration of the planets is most auspicious. The great Bear of Muscovy doth swiftly wane and the crescent Moon of Islam riseth to the ascendant. Thus I foretell a sure and speedy triumph!"

My prophecy so delighted Batu Khan that needs must he requite me with camel-train and kibitka, beseeching me to honour him with my company upon "his happy holiday." Whereat, I, nothing loth, consented graciously thereto.

A fortnight after we embarked on our journey. Across the interminable sultry Gobi Desert for nights we marched, bivouacking by day in shadowy oases, till we came to the snow-crowned Altai mountains. Traversing a beetling pass we descended into a new

¹ *The Great White Wall*, William Rose Benet.

Inferno, the endless Kirghiz Steppe. Strange and outlandish were the nomads we met, many the wonders and divers the dangers we encountered. Nor was nature less malevolent than man. What with serpents, lions, and kindred reptiles, hunger, thirst, and heat, my daily round of hardship was scarce a happy holiday. Set upon by bandits in lone defiles, we ravaged where'er we went annexing thereby much gayneful pillage.

Ever grew the band of the Golden Horde, augmented at each encampment by a new tribe till at length it numbered a host of two-hundred thousand yellow cut-throats lusting to swarm upon unwitting Muscovy like a plague of seventeen-year locusts.

One priceless blessing was vouchsafed me during this direful journey, for ever as we rode feasted I my sight upon the youthful Alexander. With like admiration eyed he me, for in sooth we had much in common, being both youthful, valiant, and of comely mien, gifted withal with wheedling tongues the which nor man nor maid hath e'er withstood. Moreover a love surpassing the love of woman sprang up betwixt us. Brothers like unto David and Jonathan we speedily became, confiding one another the inmost secrets of our hearts.

The Russian recounted how he had been summoned from his wedding feast to the onslaught of the Teuton Knights, the while his lonely bride sought refuge in white-walled Kief-town.



"Summoned from his wedding-feast Alexander knelt before the altar."

From the painting by Kramskoi, *Russian Heroes, Saints, and Sinners*, by Sonia E. Howe, permission Williams and Norgate, London

One night as we sat about the camp-fire, the Khan scoffed at Prince Alexander's faithfulness.

"Is not one wench fair as another?" he sneered. "Here be maids of wondrous beauty. Gather thee a garden of these luscious Persian roses!"

A frown furrowed the brow of the Russian.

"Misguided Paynim! What knowest thou of love save from the piteous prisoners of thine harem?"

"Naught!" shrugged the Khan, unlacing from his brow a silken scarf. "Behold, my friend, this token of a woman's faithlessness!" He uttered a peal of ironic laughter. "Faith, the theme is a pretty one. List, I will sing thee the ballad of my vanished youth!"

Tuning the chords of his Tartar lute, the Khan sang:

The Silken Scarf

Of sense bereft at a silk scarf I stare
With sightless eyes englazed with black despair.
Ai! Alas! For falsest are the fair!

In days long fled of light, tempestuous youth
I loved a Grecian girl in very sooth.
The maid was mild and fair as summer sea
But my brief joy was fated swift to flee.
Ai! Alas! 'Twas fated swift to flee!

One day I feasted friends within my gate.
A Jew accursèd mocked my joyous state.
"You dream," he laughed, "in pleasure's idle whirl.
But yet beware thy faithless Grecian girl!"
Ai! Alas! Beware thy Grecian girl!

I cursed the Jew, but gold in guerdon gave,
Then summoned to my side my Tartar slave.
My charger fleet I mounted in hot haste
And swiftly coursed across the desert waste.
The maiden's dwelling scarcely could I mark,
My limbs grew faint, my sight grew sudden dark.
Ai! Alas! My sight grew sudden dark!

I entered swift a prey to mad alarms.
My Grecian maid sprang from her lover's arms!
I faltered not but bared my shining blade
And cleft the caitiff's head from off his torse,
Then spurned beneath my heel the bleeding corse,
And pitiless assailed the guilty jade,
Heedless of her endearments as she clove
Imploring mercy—then I slew my love!
Ai! Alas! I slew my love!

Then tore the silken scarf from off her head
And wiped my reeking blade and swiftly sped.
With night's dark mists my trusty Tartar slave
Their bodies threw in Volga's silent wave.
Since then no wildering eyes my life delight,
Since then my ebon locks have turned to white.
Of sense bereft at a silk scarf I stare
With sightless eyes englazed with black despair.
Ai! Alas! For falsest are the fair!

PUSHKIN.

In the course of my manifold vagabonding it hath been my misfortune to encounter all manner of spawn of Satan, but for sheer inhuman cruelty, I confess I must yield the palm to the relentless Khan.

Now you must know Batu cherished implacable

hate for the Muscovite knight. Natheless since he could in nowise do murder to a guest, the guileful Tartar sought to compass his end by treachery. Wherefore, well recking the Russian's love of sport, the Khan bade Alexander accompany him upon a lion hunt.

Leading his trustful guest to a mountain rill Batu bade him wait what quarry might hap that way. Whereupon the Khan bade his miscreants make a mighty battue, affrighting from their lairs a score of ravening lions, which with shouting and clashing of gongs the beaters drove toward the unsuspecting Prince.

Swift and dire would have been his fate had it not been for my wonted resourcefulness. For having marked thereabout sundry fountains spouting a loathly stinking slime, which I doubted were water, I conceived a marvelous invencioun, whereof more anon, whereby I might accomplish my friend's deliverance.

The while I mused, of a sudden came on the lions, with such dreadful roaring that, valiant huntsman as I am, when I beheld those horrid monsters advancing at full gallop my locks rose like quills of the fretful porcupine. Natheless unaffrighted in mind, taking careful aim at the foremost, I fired my flintlock. Suddenly betwixt us and the onrushing beasts flashed a wall of flame! In an instant it ignited the fountains, which with the fumes of Inferno spouted deadly fires upon our adversaries.

Blinded, singed, the terror-stricken lions incontinently

turned tail, back-charging against the beaters, rending and devouring them in most joyous manner. Such of the quarry as were caught in the flames, roasted to a turn, furnished a feast for the carnivorous Khan, albeit I own the flesh proved over savoury for my taste.

Thereafter would the Prince in no wise hazard voyaging further with so treacherous a host, but turning northward, set forth for his native city of Novgorod. Ere we parted, Alexander besought me with most brotherly urgency that I journey with him. Albeit it irked me sore to refuse so handsome an offer I needs must fear to venture so far from my proper destination.¹

Whereupon with long and hearty adieus I bade my brother rover God-speed, little wotting how soon he that deemed himself brother unto death, was fated to become an implacable—but here again I forerun the course of my chronicle.

III

HOW THE KHAN SACKED THE ROYAL CITY AND, ALBEIT MY
RESENTMENT WAXED EVER GREATER, WHEN I MIGHT
HAVE QUIT HIS COMPANY, HOW FOR QUEST OF A MOON-
FLOWER I AVAILED MYSELF NOT OF MY OPPORTUNITY

The Corn-field

Beyond Don's restless, turbid tide,
Ringed round by Ural snows,

¹ Soldalia, near the present Azof, where Marco and his father maintained a house of traffic.

A steppe-land loometh far and wide
Wherein a corn-field grows.

But no mild flocks its pastures grazed
In dim, forgotten fame,
But Tartar hordes its izbas razed
With scimitar and flame.

In this far vale no folk do dwell
To reap the golden grain,
Where countless Russian heroes fell
Like grasses on the plain.

No welcome dews of even shades
Refreshed the thirsty plain,
But burning tears of Cossack maids
Bedewed its breast like rain.
Each curving crest that lift the blades
Springs from a sweetheart slain!

SAKHAROF.

Death stalked ever before the ruthless Tartar Horde.
Throughout the plains of Muscovy from Don to Dnieper
the natives, incontinently fled or yielded themselves in
vain to the conqueror's pity.

The Khan's wont when sieging a doomed city was
first to girt it about with a lofty stockade wherefrom
might none escape. Whereupon he brought forth his
battering-rams, breached the walls, and took the de-
fences in frenzied assault. Drunk with blood-lust the
relentless Mongols looted and massacred till not a living
soul remained.

Thus rode the Golden Horde ravaging with flame and

scimitar smiling hamlets, till they came at last to white-walled Kief-town.

By means of mangonel and trebuchet they hurled boulders of prodigious weight into the beleaguered city. In vain the valiant Muscovites battled to the death holding the outer wall the while their women builded another, behind which they forthwith withdrew.

Dire was the din of conflict: the shouts of besiegers, neighing of steeds, clash of arms, creaking of engines, and crash of falling walls were so terrific that even the hungry vultures soaring over the embattled hosts scattered in sudden affright.

Three days and nights the Tartars sacked the royal city, putting to the sword its male inhabitants, bearing the women captive, and leaving but a heap of blackened ruins.¹

All Nature seemed to weep the loss of her regal crown. The wind moaned o'er the endless sun-burned steppe. The leaves wailed in the birch woods. The waves flowed 'neath the crumbled walls, dark and despairing, as if Mother Dnieper likewise bewailed.

Sore was my heart at sight of this ruthless devastation. In my rôle of surgeon I endeavoured to succour the wounded, ministering as best I might to the hapless

¹ The devastation in 1240 was so utter that for two centuries the site remained a desert. Of that Kief, which in the days of Yaroslav rivalled the glory of Tsargrad, remains but a shadow of its lost magnificence.

captives of the victorious Khan, certain *boyarinas*² who having vainly sought asylum in the crypt of the cathedral had been dragged from hiding, victims of the Mongol's lust.

Villages rearward burn. Smoke-black the sky.
Torrents of flame pour onward from afar
O'er the golden corn and silver meadow-grass,
Whence rolls a rumbling cloud
Of Tartar soldiery! The slant-eyed horsemen
Sway buoyantly in their saddles for
There is no peril and they are content,
Laden with chalices, crucifixes, and reliquaries,
With vestments, mantles, and apparel.
Lowling of cows, and bleat of goats and sheep
Ring forth like sweetest music in their ears
The while each drags, their tresses twined
Like ropes about his bony hand,
Three or four women, naked utterly,
And blood bedabbled, for their breasts
With a sheer wound are all pierced through and through

I. S. NACHAR.

(*Czechoslovak Review.*)

At last the blood-sated horde set forth on its interminable return march. With clash of cymbals and beat of kettle-drums first rode the horsemen bearing the Khan's banner, three bison tails, emblematical of that brutal herd whose pasturage was blood. Each upon his spear bore a Christian head and they numbered ten-score thousand.

² *Boyarina*, noblewoman.

Then followed, dragged by scores of oxen, creaking wains laden with loot. Broideries, candelabra and cruses from church and monastery, coin and jewels from treasury and bazar, and last of all litters of maidens from nunnery and *terem*.²

The while I lagged behind watching for my chance to quit forever the company of these accursed Paynims, at a parting of the ways ere I turned southward to liberty, there passed a caravan!

Of a sudden from the parted curtains of a palanquin peered a face of such surpassing lovesomeness that I stood entranced, deeming I beheld a houri of Paradise. A wistful smile flamed in her tear-dimmed eyes. Drawing a moon-flower from her hair, she tossed the blossom to my feet.

Kneeling, I plucked the flower from the dust and kissed it reverently.

Ere I could summon speech the guards thrust me aside and the litter lurched by.

Abandoning my determination to seek Soldalia, I followed the caravan of the Khan singing the while within my heart:

" The caravan winds on amain
Across the sands to far Sarai.
I follow on its endless train
The Captive's captive till I die.

² *Terem*, women's apartments.

IV

OF MY METALSOME STEED SURED IN THE ASTROLOGER'S
TOWER AND HOW MERRILY IT CARACOLED

At Sara in the land of Tartarye
There dwelt a King that warried Russie.

While that the King sat thus in his nobley,
Hearkening the fowles their sweet minstrelsy,
In at the hallé door all suddenly
There came a knight upon a steed of brass,
That turned and stood with writhing of a pin.
He that it wrought he couldé many a gin;
He waited many a constellation
Ere he had done this operation.

Great was the press that swarméd to and fro
To garen on this horse that standeth so,
But evermore their mesté wonder was
How it couldé go—and was of brass!
It was of Faerie, as the people deemed.
And said was y' like Pegasse
The horse that haddé winges for to flee.

CHAUCER. *The Squire's Tale.*

Now, at last, patient peruser of my paltry chronicle,
do I make known to thee my delight when, during the
lion hunt, I chanced upon the fountains spouting
heavenward their mysterious elixir. Marking their in-
fernal potency, I resolved to compel this fiery demon to
labour at my will.

Whereupon, by dint of the superhuman intellect

a bountiful Creator did endow me, I conceived the curious engine afore-described—the steed of Brass, which went “with writhing of a pin.”

Wherefore, drawing from the wells several tuns of this ill-smelling fluid I caused it to be laden on camels and caravaned across the mountains to the Golden Horde. Thereafter, when the Khan bestowed upon me a tower on the wall, wherein to practise the black arts, in its subterranean vaults I did distil a wondrous liquor wherewith to put the missing kick into my almost living steed.

Upon a day, the while I bent o’er the cauldrons of my secret still, of a sudden the Khan entered and surprised me at my task. Espying my metalsome steed, the astonished Paynim bade me expound

The virtue of this courser and the might,
And prayéd me to tell his governance.

Whereupon I poured a flagon of the magic liquor into my thirsty charger’s maw.

Whereat the horse gan for to trip and dance
And snort, as doth a wilde bulle roar
When that the javelin pricketh him full sore.

Thereat I laid mine hand upon his rein, and having curbed his uproarious caracoling, said:

“Sire there is no more to sain,
But when you list to riden any where
Ye moten trill a pin stant in his ear.

And to descend ye trill another pin.
Or if you list to fly as high in th' air
As doth an eagle, when him list to soar,
This samé steed shall bear you evermore.
In such a guise as I will do full soon—
Ride when you list there is no more to done!”

Flaming to essay my metalsome charger's speed, I
bade the Khan mount behind me on his back. Again
I filled his belly with a pood of the life-giving elixir and,
turning the pin, of a sudden the steed reared in air and
we caracoled merrily through streets and bazaars, over-
turning pomegranate booths, putting to flight men and
other wine-skins, camels, goats, old women, swine, chil-
dren and the like encumbrances—slaying sundry and
maiming a multitude.

Whereat so intoxicated with the wine of wonderment
was my illustrious patron, that thereafter needs must I
daily cavalier him upon my tireless Pegasus!

V

WHAT I BEHELD FROM THE TOWER OF THE ASTROLOGER

Orient Eyes

Two smiling ebon eyes
Have witched me with their spell,
Brighter than Orient skies,
But whose—I shall not tell!

Through lids of silken lace
Their fires are gleaming bright.

A slave before their grace
I kneel in rapt delight.

Two smiling ebon eyes
Have witched me with their spell,
Brighter than Orient skies,
But whose—I shall not tell.

Gipsy Song.

By night from the terrace of my tower, I was wont to feign studious observation of the heavenly firmament. This hocus-pocus of star-gazing and sundry similar antics, redounded mightily to my credit in the eyes of the credulous denizens of Sarai. Moreover, my tower furnished a secret point of vantage wherefrom I might survey the garden of the seraglio, whose living, lovesome hours liked me better than the cold celestial bodies.

Above a pool, in whose pellucid depths swam a lustrous moon, 'gainst ebon cypresses shone a white kiosk. Upon its marble balcony stood a sylph-like form. Directing thither my glass, of a sudden I discerned beyond peradventure my fair Moon-flower, the hapless Christian Captive. Bright oriental garments belied her race. Albeit in her hand she cherished a golden cross lifting the while her tear-dimmed eyes in supplication.

Only a soulless Paynim could scorn such piteous appeal. Wherefore bided I not, but by dint of a rope lowered myself slowly into the garden. Crouching 'neath the cypress shade I stealthily crept to the casement. Whereupon, trilling the note of a nightingale:



“The Oriental raiment belied her race, but in her hand she cherished a golden cross.”

Jaroslav Cermak

Permission Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York

"Fair Captive," I murmured, "may I not free thee from these loathly bonds?"

"Ai! Alas!" she sighed, "albeit thou mayst render a more precious boon!"

"An thou disclose thy need 'tis done!" I made answer gallantly.

"In pity, courteous knight, give me thy dagger!" besought the Muscovite maid.

"A surer weapon shall I give thee, one in sooth that shall slay thy foe ere he come nigher than yonder fountain!" I vaunted. Loosing from my baldric a brass bombard, "Behold this little engine of mine imagination!" I commanded. "Voyaging in far Cathay I discovered a marvellous Devil's dust. Whereof place but a pinch within this tube, thrust therein a leaden pellet, point precisely, crooking thy finger, as thus, when of a sudden with a flash of lightning and clamour of thunder, the pellet will leap forth and perforate the inwards of thy foe!"¹

Her eyes betokened wonderment and withal affright.

"Of a surety 'tis Devil's dust indeed," she shuddered.

"Here is a horn of the precious powder! Guard it far from flame," I cautioned, "lest thou do thyself mischief!"

I endeavored to pass the bombard through the grat-

¹ Note by Marco: "These curious contraptions have I caused to be fabricated by artificers of Pistoja, wherefore are they now denominated pistols."

ing, but the aperture proved too small and the weapon stuck fast. As I strove vainly to dislodge it a footfall sounded on the pathway.

I leaped into the shrubbery only an instant ere the Khan passed.

Taking a key from his robe he turned the lock.

“Cross not the threshold!” cried the Captive, “or I slay thee with this magic tube!”

With a scornful laugh, the Khan flung wide the door.

Mounting a tabouret the maiden strove to grasp the pistol but in vain,—her slight stature did not suffice.

The Khan eyed the bombard curiously.

“Witch!” he sneered, “thou canst not fright me with like trinkets! Wherefore learn no more to thwart my will!”

A sudden flash, the scimitar fell severing the Captive’s hand.

“So, this little hand would have slain me!” he laughed. “Let it remain forever a warning to like assassins!” placing its bloody fingers upon the pistol’s hilt.

With a moan the girl sank swooning to the floor.

Springing from hiding I brushed by the astonished Khan and, kneeling over the Captive, strove to staunch her wound.

“Let her not perish for lack of tendance,” I protested, binding the bleeding wrist with strips from my turban.

Touched with seeming ruth, Batu enjoined me to

redouble my ministrations and at parting gave me the key of the postern bidding me come and go at will.

“Work thy craftiest, Chirurgeon,” he commanded, “for the sooner her wound may heal, the sooner shall I take her as bride!”

VI

HOW BY MY RESOURCEFULNESS I SALVED THE WOUNDS OF THE
PRINCESS AND, SEEKING HER DELIVERANCE, WAS FORE-
STALLED BY FATE

Dost thou recall the moon's wan silver light
Glinting upon the sleeping sapphire sea,
The slender cedars swaying dreamily
Beneath the murmurs of the Orient night;
How silently within the garden bright
We gazed entranced—faint roses filled the air,
From out a grotto in the forest fair
A brooklet sang its song of blithe delight!

An echo of that perished melody
Still rings its magic music in mine ear
Through all the sullen storms of ruthless fate
Thrilling my jaded heart with joy elate,
Again that brooklet's song I seem to hear
And all my soul awakes with love of thee.

POLONSKI.

Now you must know how craftily I made use of my official capacity to allay not alone the corporeal distress of the Princess but likewise her heart's malady. Relating through what dire and manifold dangers I had safely

ventured, I vowed that blessed San Marco had destined me to be the means of her deliverance.

With my wonted address in sundry encounters with like fair antagonists I won forthwith the lady's sisterly love and gratitude. But such mild affection, like some frigid sherbet unwarmed by a modicum of generous liqueur, have I ever found insipid and unsatisfying. Natheless Princess purissima, methinks after all these vanished years thou hast not yet utterly forgot the vagabond lover who, albeit unrequited his humble adoration, did venture death for thy sweet sake. But here again my Pegasus outgallops his ordered course.

Now you must learn the while her wound was healing, I sculptured an ivory hand of exceeding loveliness, cunningly contrived to articulate in the most natural manner the which I affixed to her severed wrist by dint of a jewelled bracelet. Such marvel of artifice did I compass that, save only by touch might the most incredulous divine that this perfect, mobile mechanism was not in sooth a living, human hand.

The days drew near to the approaching wedding. A single desperate desire obsessed the Captive. With tear-dimmed eyes she implored me to release and bear her safe to her beloved. She told me she was the Princess Vassa, bride of my erstwhile friend Alexander Yaroslavitch! Honour and love battled in my heart. Ye who know me cannot doubt which conquered.

Touched by her piteous entreaties, I devised a wondrous plan for her speedy deliverance.

"Little wotteth the Khan," I laughed, "that 'neath my tower runneth a forgotten aqueduct. Long syne it was builded by skilful Scythians to refresh this thirsty plain. Today, ruined and dry, it leadeth straight to the far, free hills. Through its secret recesses we shall fly to liberty by dint of my brazen steed!"

"Sweet Ser Marco," she pleaded, the while her arms twined my neck, "this very night I pray thee, bear me to my lord! Naught of wealth or honour shall be too great for thy reward!"

"As thou wilt, dear lady!" I made answer, "but of these paltry baubles will I none. One priceless boon do I covet, albeit like bliss, alas! is not for such poor vagabond. Wherefore will I naught, save a vain hope that in thy forthcoming felicity thou wilt somewhile think of me!"

Whereat of a sudden she bussed me roundly on my mouth, then abased trembling lids, scarlet roses flaming her cheeks.

Now upon a certain moonless night when I deemed the time ripe for her deliverance, sought I the Princess.

Natheless Kismet fated that the while I bespake my beloved through the carven tracery, the boughs parted and with bare scimitar and stealthy step through the

shadows crept the Khan. Gripping my poniard I sprang aside wotting well my hour had come.

"Blessed San Marco aid me!" I muttered. Whereupon of a sudden I discerned in the sky a flutter of ebon wings.

In my glad amaze I doubted not that they were celestial pinions swift-winging to my succour. Nonetheless I soon perceived them to be but a flock of rooks, the which, attracted by the severed hand fluttered down to peck at the gruesome morsel.

I mind at that moment how I thought since long-forgotten time the raven hath alway been accounted a harbinger of instant doom.

If like forebodings haunted the Khan he shrugged them aside and, fitting key to lock, threw wide the door.

"Help, in the name of pity!" rang a sudden cry.

Leaping from covert I sped to the succour of my beleaguered inamorata. But a merciful fate forestalled my endeavours. Affrighted by the shrieks of the captive, a raven fluttered from the severed hand. The pistol flashed flame, bearing its vengeful missive straight to the Khan's heart!

I scarce knew whether the fast-glazing eyes of the Tartar recognized me bending over him, but his last mortal glance was rife with relentless hate.

Ere I might bear to safety my wilted Moon-flower, a score of maddened Mongols, alarmed by the pistol-shot, swarmed suddenly about us, wrested her from my

protecting arms and remanded the Captive, to the Terem. In sooth, as the Khan's minions beheld the carcass of their defunct master it would have gone ill with the vagabond Marco had not his wonted wit stood him in accustomed stead. Pointing to the ill-omened bird I asseverated: "Behold, I am innocent, the Raven of Doom hath dealt avengement."

Curiosity gaining the ascendant over superstition they demanded that I explain the mechanism of this magic tube. Whereat writing a line on a sheet of vellum torn from a Koran, I wrapped it about a leaden pellet and loaded the bombard. "Cheer thee, Princess," it said, "this very night will I speed to thy succour, for 'tis written in the book of fate that I shall not fail!"

Before the eyes of the astonished Tartars I sent the missive through the seraglio grille, aiming my precious bombard with such address that the bullet flattened itself against the granite archway, unrolling the scroll at the Captive's feet.

VII

HOW THE KAHN'S DEMISE WROUGHT GREATER WOE THAN
WEAL, AND YET MY METAL-SOME CHARGER BROUGHT
UNHOPED DELIVERANCE

Frantically whirled the dervishes and the wailing-women bemoaned and beat their breasts, as at mid of the night I stole through the palace-postern speeding

silently to my tryst. Alas! I little recked what lay in store.

Beneath the pavilion stone-masons had delved a vault, wherein they entombed the defunct potentate, his virgin bride bedecked in her wedding finery lying drugged with hasheesh by his side.

"Take heart! Princess Vassa!" I called repeatedly, but the dumb walls of that dread tomb gave no reply. Frenziedly I beat on the brazen doors, striving to rouse the Princess from her living death, but in vain; the fatal drug had lulled her to lethal sleep.

With characteristic subtlety I bribed the masons into my subterranean laboratory, where by dint of threats I forced them to delve a tunnel. With fevered haste I goaded them ever onward to the task, the while each minute, to my distracted imagination, lagged like hours. After longsome and strenuous toil we encountered the unyielding wall of the cenotaph. Despite our utmost endeavours we were powerless to loosen its massive granite boulders.

Inserting a modicum of Devil's dust in a crevice, I ignited the powder and blasted a rift through the ponderous wall. Shouting lustily through this improvised speaking tube, I succeeded in rousing the Princess from her swoon.

Natheless a superhuman spirit of resignation overpowered her will to live.

"Only a little, Beloved," she murmured, "till I abide

within those celestial gardens where dwelleth endless peace. Lo, even now I feel myself soaring slowly thither. Weep not, dear friend, for all is well."

I strove to re-awaken within her heart desire for life, pleading thus with my dying Moon-flower:

MARCO

"How grim the grave! How lonely, cold and drear!
The tempest wails, and shrilly creaks the bier;
While shriek and gibber all the ghosts of gloom!"

VASSA

"How calm the grave! How peaceful, still and deep
Its mossy bed serene in dreamless sleep,
With blossoms rife and breath of sweet perfume."

MARCO

"There feasts upon the flesh the carrion-fly,
Within the empty skull the toad doth lie
And serpent foul its noisome coil doth ply."

VASSA

"How calm the endless hush of life's long night—
No storm here broods, but ever sunshine bright,
And nightingales sing slumbrous love-songs light."

MARCO

"With noisome reek and poisonous, fetid breath,
Of dark decay is filled the house of death
And barren boughs all blossomless and bare."

VASSA

“How soft the zephyrs blow about the tomb!
And rife with languorous breath of faint perfume,
With lilies sweet and fragrant jasmines bright.”

MARCO

“The voyager who, rent with pale affright,
Would fain from suageless pain take sudden flight
Is wrecked upon the reefs of ruthless night.”

VASSA

“The pilgrim of life’s endless path forlorn
Lays down his heavy staff and sandals worn
And rests his weary limbs in slumber light.”¹

Of a sudden rose a loud alarm! With a mighty crash
the tunnel wall burst asunder and through the falling
débris rushed a knight in shining mail.

It was none other than Prince Alexander, who, marking
the ancient aqueduct, had followed the dried water-
course into the city in quest of his beloved.

“Heaven be praised that hath sent thee to our
succour,” laughed I, “albeit from thy mien meseems
thou comest from the nether regions!”

“Nay, Brother Marco,” he made protest, “I come
not to succour but to destroy! Even now my armies
ring Sarai round with a wall of steel. What with ram,
mangonel, and palisade ’tis so soundly beleaguered

¹ Karamzin.

not a rat can escape. Wherefore dally we no longer, but pack yon crevice with thy Devil's dust whereby we may rend this paltry sepulchre as with the blast of Gabriel's trump!"

"Alas!" I bemoaned, "not so much as a pinch of the precious powder do I possess."

"Mere mortal might no longer may avail," sighed the good knight as he vainly struggled to part the brazen doors.

Thereupon flashed into my teeming brain an inspiration of the gods. I reflected that in my metal-some charger I possessed a source of invincible and superhuman might. Wherefore running to my tower I loosed from his stall my faithful steed, the which cavorted merrily to the cenotaph. Harnessing him to the portal, I filled his belly with the precious life-giver whereat he kicked and plunged, charging down the tunnel like a maddened Cordovan bull, dragging the door after as 'twere a feather.

Springing within, Alexander lifted the seeming lifeless Princess from her bier and bore her to my tower, where under his gentle ministrations she swiftly gathered strength.

Natheless our triumph was short-lived, for at this juncture my friends, the masons, stole secretly off and raising hue and cry in the city summoned the warriors of the Khan.

Ere I was ware a hundred swarthy rascals had barred

the mouth of the aqueduct cutting off that means of escape.

"Swift," I cried, "to the roof!" Bearing the Princess, Alexander sprang up the turret stairs the while I hewed down the steps behind me with a great gisarm while the baffled Tartars gaped in dumb amaze.

In the nick of time we gained the roof, where, by dint of windlass and tackle, we laboriously hoisted my metal-some steed to the terrace. Affixing to his back a pair of mighty pinions, I transformed him into a veritable Pegasus. With my wonted foresight I poured into his insatiable bowels copious draughts of the might-giving elixir. Whereat his heart beat joyously and his limbs thrilled with sudden life.

Binding the Princess to the saddle, lest swooning she might fall, I unfolded the wings of my magic courser, purring like a joyous tom-cat, and, to the chagrin of the thunder-struck Tartars, we soared over walls and houses in safety to the Russian camp.

There I gained, as guerdon for all my toil and sacrifice, a pang of bitter misery in the whole-souled bliss of the united lovers.

Incredible though it seem, through all these many years my Lady's felicity has thrilled me with a wondrous joy, so that I now look back upon that moment as the most sacred memory of my life.

Beloved Moon-flower, destined not, alas! for my

plucking, if thou couldst but know how the heart of a
vagabond voyager beats still with vain-longing.

I love thee, with a love that knows no stain.
The smouldering ashes of Life's brief delight
Burn still within my breast like embers bright.
Yet would I spare thee, dear, the lightest pain,
Nor fan the slumbering fire to flame again,
Fearing to rouse anew the old desire,
Lest love in ecstasy should swift expire,
So ardent still my passion, all in vain.

I love thee with a timid, dumb dismay—
Fearful thy white-souled loveliness to taint,
Abased with jealousy and blind despair
I worship thee like some celestial saint
Devoutly,—with such pure contentment rare,
God grant thy lover love thee thus, I pray.

PUSHKIN.

And when drowsing idly in my palazzo the mild
southern zephyrs waft spicy odours from argosies in the
Grand Canal, I think of the half-forgotten stanza:

The Caravan winds on its way
Across the sands to far Sarai,
I linger on each lonely day
The Captive's captive till I die!

CHAPTER V

THE RED TSAR

A Familiar Picture

In the mists of Spring-tide lying
O'er the marge of the old mill stream,
Where the fisher-nets hang drying,
I linger awhile and dream.

I gaze, distraught and dreaming,
Through the drifting cloud-rack drear
At the distant sunset gleaming,
And the smoke of a hamlet near.

Alone in the growing gloaming
Stands a Jew in garments sere.
With a welter of thunderous foaming
The water flows over the weir.

A moujik lad is singing
On a flute of willow make,
And the frightened ducks are winging
Their wedge o'er the mist-clad lake.

The rickety mill-wheel rumbling,
Is humming a melody sweet;
While a clumsy cart-horse, stumbling,
Plods by with heavy feet.

It seems as if I had been here,
 Though whenever I scarcely know,
 'Tis a picture I surely have seen, dear,
 In the days of long ago.

The self-same Jew was filling
 His sack at the same old mill,
 And the self-same lad was trilling
 His flute with the same sweet thrill.

And the horse with his gait unsteady
 And the waters' weltering spell,
 I'm sure that I've seen them already,
 But whenever—I cannot tell!

ALEXIS TOLSTOI.

FOREWORD

FAMILIAR indeed is this typically Russian word-picture bringing back memories of the ancient hamlet of Uglitch as one April evening we wandered through its dusk-gilded lanes in quest of legends of the long-dead days.

Dominating the huddled izbas loomed the rose-red castle of Ivan, within whose placid garden the ill-fated little Tsarevitch met doom at the dagger of an assassin.

In the shadow of the palace a rickety mill rumbled its mossy wheel in the weltering waters of the weir. The balcony of our humble inn jutted over the foaming mill-race, above which a fragile wooden stairway led down to the broad river.

Mother Volga lay red and glistening in the fires of the setting spring-tide sun. The river ice had broken,

sterlets, sturgeon, and pike freed from their long wintry imprisonment were leaping joyously in the gloaming, rippling the tranquil mirror with ever-widening rings.

Descending the ruinous stairway to the river-bank we watched a fisher-lad plying his net. The fish were so hungry that he had but to cast his line and scoop them up in dozens. A carp snapped the bait, a ferocious pike fixed its teeth instantly in the carp's back, while the fisherman took them both, still fighting in their death-throes.

"Small chance would one have to swim across the river," he laughed, as he opened the pike's jaws. "See his teeth, hundreds, sharp as needles!"

Malusha, the inn-keeper's daughter shuddered! "Take away the assassin! The Barina shall have a pie made of sterlets. They are harmless; but the pike we call the Tsar's executioners! Often I lie awake nights, listening to the breaking ice wondering how the brave bogatyr Nikita dared free his British bride ere Ivan threw her to the pike."

"Tradition tells the Red Tsar thrust a bride through a hole in the ice for showing him too slight affection, but I have never heard that she was English," I commented incredulously.

"Does the Barina not know of Lady Mary Hastings?" she queried in amaze.

"Assuredly," I assented, "but the current English version of her story recounts that Mary refused the

unwelcome proposals of the Terrible Tsar, and died unwedded in her own country."

Malusha shrugged deprecatingly. "Our skazki tell another tale. However, who knows, Barina, it was so long ago?"

In the glamouring moonlight Malusha recounted her tale, which, since it fills the lacunæ in the well-known chronicle of Sir Jerome Horsey, *Elizabeth's Secret Ambassador*, the authors here retell.

I

AN UNWELCOME SUITOR

All London was agog. The Embassy dispatched by the Red Tsar to negotiate his English marriage had at last arrived.¹

With consummate diplomacy the Virgin Queen had duped her fatuous admirer into conceding her important trade monopolies while making secret mock at his preposterous suit.

Wherefore, when the amorous Ivan maintained his willingness to quit his country, good Queen Bess, perceiving she had played with fire, poured water on his ardent flame.

She entertained for the monarch of Muscovy "the love of a sister and wished heartily for an alliance,"

¹ September, 1582.

thus she wrote, "but could in no wise brook the thought of his making so vast a sacrifice for her poor sake."

Incontinent with chagrin Ivan retorted in a torrent of invective.

"Madam! I had thought thee mistress in thine house. Now I see thou art ruled by men. And what men? Mere moujiks! Thyself—thou art nothing but a *pochlaia dievitsa*!¹ Baggage! I renounce all intercourse with thee. Moscow can do without the English moujiks!"

Incredible in sooth that the daughter of good King Hal could have swallowed such a dose of insult, but Elizabeth bethought her of the coveted stake. Wherefore she prayed his gracious Tsarship to accept, in lieu of herself, "Mary Hastings, cousin of the blood royal, most beauteous, virtuous and desirable daughter of the worshipful Earl of Huntington."

To this unforeseen necessity the Red Tsar reluctantly resigned himself and forthwith dispatched an embassy to conclude the wedding formalities.

The presents they bestowed upon his bride-to-be befitted her forthcoming estate: priceless sables, imperial gems, services enamelled with most curious goldsmithry, and a portrait of his illustrious highness.

Nothing seemed wanting save the paltry consent of the bride!

Indeed Mary had not even been consulted, and, despite the Queen's command, proved sadly recalcitrant.

¹ *Pochlaia dievitsa*, a vulgar wench.

In vain Elizabeth thundered, threatened, and cursed. In vain the Earl of Huntington implored and cajoled,—Mary refused to wed this uncouth Muscovite bear.

The father begged for time wherein to tame his daughter's obduracy.

"Let the ambassadors do the Tsar's wooing by proxy," counselled the Queen, "so be 't is done. S'death! is a Tudor Princess to be wed unwooed?"

For months Elizabeth dallied befooling the deputation with pretty speeches. Missives from the Kremlin grew ever more urgent. The Tsar chafed under the delay and waxed daily more wrathfully insistent.

The Muscovite Ambassador, Count Pizemski, was at his wits' end. He had exhausted his last resource in futile effort to gain Mary's consent. He summoned his youthful confrère, Nikita Romanoff.

"Show this birth-proud damsel," he commanded, "how a boyar maketh love! Take her by assault! Woo her as for thy very self!"

Scorning answer Romanoff quitted the conference chamber.

With a shrug the Ambassador addressed his colleague:

"The Lady Mary Hastings hath a romantic fantasy," he leered, "I will confide to her that Nikita is the Tsar, hither come incognito to woo for himself. Hath the maid not eyes to note his princely parts! Forsooth she will leap at the bait like a starving sturgeon!"

“Romanoff is the soul of honour,” protested the other, “he will not lend himself to like knavery.”

“Nikita shall know nothing. Needs but we throw the twain together, 'tis not in human heart to withstand Cupid's darts. Ere the hawthorn blows we will have them plighted and bear her back to our amorous master.”

“What of the bride when she discerneth how shamelessly she hath been cozened?”

The diplomat winked; “Leave that to Nikita! Once the quarry trapped forsooth he will console her!”

“Heaven forfend! Ivan would not scruple at murder, or the hapless lovers would throw themselves into the Moskva. My friend, 'tis a tragic plot thou art hatching!”

“But not for us,” laughed Pizemski, slapping his wallet. “For us the tragedy were to return without the bride!”

II

THE WEREWOLF

When sinks the sun in shadow
And sleeps the village gay;
When, o'er the silent meadow,
The night-mist gathers grey;
Then from its forest fastness,
Across the dreary vastness
The hungry pack comes prowling for its prey!

Behind the leader hoary,
 Follow the silent pack:
 Eight she-wolves, lean and gory,
 One red, the others black.
 Behind them, lame and muddy,
 The rear-wolf, red and bloody,
 About her haggard comrades slinketh back!

Throughout the hamlet straying,
 Naught giveth them affright.
 The stag-hound stills its baying,
 The peasant, pale and white
 In breathless terror quaking,
 All hope his heart forsaking,
 A shriek of horror raiseth to the night!

Around the church they're roaming,
 Then slowly slink away
 And haunt the ghostly gloaming;
 When, sudden, fain would they
 About the tavern turning
 Some bawdy song be learning,
 From revellers carousing till the day.

With bullets keen and trusty
 Thy musket must be armed
 Nor must the bore be rusty
 If thou wouldst fight unharmed.
 Keep cool, and first the foremost
 Bring down with steady arm;
 Then one by one the rest will surely fall!

When crows the cock the morrow,
 And wakes thee from thy dream,
 Their corpses wet and muddy
 Shall lie beside the stream:

Eight she-wolves, cold and bloody,
The leader, grey and ruddy—
All stark! God pardon thee thy deadly sin!

ALEXIS TOLSTOI.

Gently ambled the high-bred coursers through the pleached lanes of Windsor Forest. Full many lovers had they borne through these sequestered byways. Scarce needed the riders draw rein, as their mounts slowed to a walk grazing each other till stirrups clinked.

Lady Mary gazed timorously into the face of the cavalier bending over her.

Of a sudden her palfrey shied, reared, and well-nigh unseated her as a grey bulk leapt from the coppice and sank its fangs in her riding-boot.

Scarce had she uttered a moan ere Nikita, slashed the brute with his hunting knife.

With a vicious snarl it relaxed its grip and sprang upon him.

Fast and surely fell the vengeful blade till, blinded with blood from a shattered shoulder, the wolf limped off in the shadows.

"Thou art hurt?" questioned Nikita anxiously scanning her foot.

"Nay," she laughed, "the sole of Mary Hastings is parlous tough!" but her laughter vanished in a sudden cry.

"Ware thee!" she shrieked, as a pack of she-wolves padded silently from the thicket.

"Uliu-liu!" cried Nikita spurring in hot pursuit. But as by enchantment the pack mysteriously vanished.

Nikita crossed himself in bewilderment.

"Werewolves!" he shuddered. "Didst mark the leader's mien? He minded me of thy loathly man-wolf suitor!"

The eyes of Lady Mary flashed flame, but melted as she noted the remorseful smile of the youthful knight.

"Such bitter self-reproach should bespeak forgiveness for thy sin, albeit methinketh thou art thyself thy harshest judge!"

"Myself?" he faltered.

"Forsooth," she laughed, "I have fathomed thy disguise. Confess thou art the Tsar!"

Nikita threw back his head in a derisive laugh, then marking a tear aquiver 'mid the downcast lashes, he bent and kissed her glove.

"Grant me absolution, gracious Lady," he pleaded, "I little recked thou couldst thus misinterpret my friendly homage. 'Tis plain now wherefore thou didst accept me for thy cavalier, albeit I build naught on thy favour blissful though the dream hath been."

The telltale scarlet tide flamed anew in the maiden's cheeks.

"Nay, 'twas not that I thought thee Tsar," she protested, "in sooth, sweet youth, I like thee for thyself."

"The Lady Mary Hastings doeth me too great hon-

our," he returned gallantly. His bowed neck bared a long white welt. Lady Mary started:

"Prithee tell me," she asked compassionately, "how thou didst gain that dreadful scar."

"I fear me we have lost the scent," stammered Nikita, "I no longer hear the hounds baying. Let us breathe our steeds the while I recount thee:

"When the dauntless Metropolitan denounced the Red Tsar for his ruthlessness Philip received a mandate summoning him to Sloboda, the Devil's Monastery. Fearing foul-play on the part of Ivan, I escorted thither the unsuspecting prelate.

"Led by thurifer and crucifer our little procession entered the *dvor*¹ where, in a balcony surrounded by his *opritchniks*,² stood the Devil Tsar.

"'Haughty prelate,' laughed Ivan, 'I have bidden my monks go forth to embrace thee!'

"Of a sudden a grille opened and a file of cowed figures issued forth. Reeling about in a maudlin dance they tore off their hoods disclosing uncouth hairy faces. The pretended monks of Ivan were none other than a band of Siberian bears.

"In sudden fright the choristers ran for their lives. '*Pax vobiscum*,' chanted the Metropolitan in blessing, while Ivan and his *opritchniks* were convulsed with delight.

¹ *Dvor*, courtyard.

² *Opritchniks*, Ivan's Devil's brood, who under pretext of suppressing treason deprived innocent thousands of property and life.



"Of a sudden the distracted father knelt over the son clasping him to his breast in impotent remorse."

I. E. Repin

From *The Russian School of Painting*, by Benois, permission Alfred A. Knopf

“Drawing my sword and thrusting the prelate behind my back I held the brutes at bay the while we retreated stealthily to the gate. But our weaponless acolytes were an easy prey for the hungry monsters who rent them limb from limb. Mounting in hot haste we fled from the pursuing opritchniks. But alas! for the good prelate, it was but a brief reprieve, for a fortnight thereafter he was murdered at command of the Tsar.”

“Yet methinks men tell thy sister’s life was a happy one,” mused Lady Mary in amaze.

“The Tsar was not thus cruel the while my sister lived,” replied Nikita, “but with Anastasia’s death Ivan developed an insatiate blood-lust. The saints be praised for taking her ere he wreaked his madness upon her. But on her death-bed she implored me not to abandon her infant sons, Ivan and Feodor.

“The Tsar loved his namesake, who as he grew older favoured his father strangely, albeit in their cups they quarrelled oft. Upon a day as the Tsarevitch returned to the Kremlin he surprised his wife in a struggle with his drunken father. As he sprang to her defence Ivan assaulted him with his steel-spiked staff. Infuriated by the gushing blood the father felled his son and smote till the last vestige of life quitted the mangled body. Then torn by sudden remorse he knelt distractedly over him, striving vainly to staunch his wounds.”

Lady Mary swayed dizzily as her cavalier swiftly sprang to her support. She recovered herself instantly.

"Tell me," she demanded with hauteur, "how, knowing the Tsar's cruelty, thou dost plead marriage in his behalf!"

"Nay, dear Lady, I am come hither with opposite intent," protested Nikita. "I fain would save thee from this hapless union by displaying his utter ruthlessness. Revolted by the Tsar's ceaseless inhumanity, I begged leave to quit Russia.

"'Go then,' cried Ivan, 'on my embassy to England.'

"Thus, nothing loth, I came, minded ere I met thee, Lady Mary, to save thee from this maniac. The very thought of his vile arms about thee maddens me to slay."

He bowed his head in his hands.

Mary brought up her palfrey and drew the hands from his tear-dimmed eyes.

"Dear!" she murmured, kissing him upon the brow.

Whereupon the young knight raised his lady from the saddle and met her lip to lip.

Anon the boughs parted and two cavaliers rode into the clearing. Nudging his comrade Count Pizemski pointed to the lovers.

"The game is trapped!" he laughed. "By the beard of Ivan, we have them trapped!"

III

A SECRET WEDDING

The interminable marriage parleys had at last come to an end.

All the flower of British gallantry was gathered to do homage to the Muscovite Embassy in a sumptuous fête at Hampton Court. Amorous strains of lute, bassoon and theorbo blended upon the gallery, the while gaily bedecked courtiers paced stately measures in the great hall.

When the banquet reached its height Elizabeth lifted her glass in a toast to the Russian Bridegroom, informing her guests that the monopolies being assured, she would bid them all God-speed.

Count Pizemski bit his lip, "And the wedding?" he stammered.

Whereupon the Earl of Huntington made protest that Ivan had long since wedded a peasant wench¹ who had borne him a son.

Unruffled by this accusation the diplomat displayed a document signed by the Tsar stating that Marya Nagoia, being but the daughter of a *boyar*² her marriage was null and void, wherefore there remained no question as to his British bride's title to the rank of Tsarina.

The Queen beamed a condescending smile. "I will dispatch forthwith to Muscovy an ambassador to conclude these parleys," she promised, "and in fitting time the bride shall follow!"

"And now Gentle Muscovites, time is I made known my faithful envoy, for 'tis like ye will have much chaffer-

¹ Marya Nagoia, mother of Prince Dimitri.

² *Boyar*, nobleman.

ing. In sooth 'tis a shrewd and goodly rogue, whom ye will find much difficulty to cozen. Albeit he sitteth below the salt natheless is he a man of sound parts, whom the worshipful company of English merchants have entrusted a fleet loaden with divers commodities wherewith to barter thereby securing in his own behalf much gayneful profit. Wherefore, as the meanest capacity may fathom, his occasions do jump with this alliance the which to his utmost possible he is like to forward. Stand forth, Sirrah, that I may set thee face to face with these Muscovite-Bears. So adroit in the chase art thou, by the Rood, that, were't not too cavalier, I would dub thee Horsey!"

A deeper scarlet dyed the ruddy cheeks of the envoy, yet swallowing the Queen's jibe he bent over her hand fawningly.

"Dub me what thou wilt an thou dub me knight, gracious Sovereign," he retorted.

"Well turned," laughed the virgin Queen, and grasping the courtier's sword bestowed upon him the accolade.

"For this favour, Sir Horsey Marchant, secure for us the best price ye can at the royal stables for this ungovernable filly who is like to travel but ill in double harness!"

White with wrath, the Tudor spirit flaring in her eyes, Mary Hastings sprang to her feet.

"By my faith! 'Tis o'er much to stomach e'en from

daughter of Good King Hal!" she flashed indignantly, and eluding the outstretched arms of her father ran out of the chamber.

Hastening after, Nikita followed Mary to the Maze.

"In pity save me!" she implored distractedly, "I pray thee, dear Heart, take me with thee to Russia."

"Nay, that were dire peril," he protested.

"Death?" she questioned tremblingly.

"Worse!" he shuddered. "Nameless digrace!"

Mary went suddenly white. "Prithee wed me in secret," she pleaded, "and I will wait thy return."

"Nay, tarry not, but haste we to yon hermit's cell," he whispered. "After will I convoy thee to France where we will bide till the Red Tsar die, when, Marya mine, I will take thee home!"

After the simple rites were finished Nikita left Lady Mary at Hampton Palace, while he rode to London and scanned the quais in quest of a ship bound for France. Only one small schooner did he find, but by dint of a bribe he induced the captain to promise passage for himself and bride.

Next morn at early dawn he rode back to Hampton Court, his heart singing the while:

The Empty Shrine

Like some fair sprite dost thou beguile
My lonely heart from out my breast,
Wouldst thou restore thy living smile
My weary soul would find its rest.

My heart, fore'er thy sacred shrine,
The chalice of my soul—thy face,
Grant me, sweet ministrant of bliss divine,
The benediction of thy wondrous grace!¹

IV

TRAPPED

On making inquiry at Hampton Court Nikita met with grievous tidings. The "sacred shrine" was indeed empty. Lady Mary had disappeared and rumour was rife that she had cast herself into the Thames!

The previous evening, infuriated by her obduracy, Elizabeth had summoned Mary to a secret audience. What there transpired had been in part overheard by sundry eavesdroppers. At the crux of the interview, they declared, the Queen burst forth in a torrent of invective, vowing by all unholy that Mary wed the Russian Bear.

"Rather shall Death be my bridegroom," cried the indomitable girl.

Yet another fusillade of oaths, threats, and recriminations from her Christian Majesty and, pallid as death, Mary quitted the audience chamber.

Like a fitting sprite she fled through the long gallery leading to the apartment of the maids of honour. Although the hour was late, too distraught was she for

¹ Lermontoff.

sleep; wherefore she lingered pacing the pavement with restless steps.

The night seemed rife with secret presences, whispers and stealthy foot-falls echoed in the silent gallery. A sense of boding doom lurked in the shadows. In vain she strove to shake off her apprehensions, telling herself that these were but the natural—

Voices of the Night

At night each random sound more clear doth seem,
Each phantom shape more fearsome yet doth grow.
Sounds that I scarcely hear when lights burn low
And o'er my book I nod and idly dream,
Grow audible and clear with sudden gleam;
While through the casement sift the moonbeams wan
And from the belfry chimes a carillon
Its haunting cadence like a flowing stream.

With joy I yield to night's serene delight,
Ever I hear her diapason deep,
Now with a clang of brass, then silvery bright,
Wave after wave in soft, recurrent rounds
As in melodious seas she blends all sounds
And with her blood-red poppies sheddeth sleep.

SHENSHIN.

In the moon-silvered offing the Muscovite galleon rode at anchor calmly biding the turn of the tide.

Pressing her face to the casement Mary waited watchfully. Presently she discerned a long-boat put off and glide silently toward the landing. With muffled oars it

stole through the moon's bright swathe then was lost in shadow. A moment later it emerged at the landing. Relinquishing the helm an officer, followed by the sailors, crept stealthily through the shrubbery toward the palace.

Her heart quickened as a tall figure shrouded in a caftan entered the stairway. Of a sudden she heard the floor creak as a stealthy step sounded near her.

"Nikita," she whispered.

Out of the gloom sprang unseen shapes. A cloak was thrown over her head. Powerful arms pinioned the struggling girl and bore her down the narrow stairway. Out through the shadowy garden they dragged her to the landing. With muffled oars the boat stole through the moon-silvered shadows to the waiting galleon, which hoisted sail, and glided silently down the flood.

In the gilded cabin beneath the poop Mary was confronted by the crooked smile of Pizemski.

"Most gracious Tsarina to be," he fawned. "I crave pardon thine embarquement was thus hasty, but since thou wouldst not consent to a more ceremonious setting forth, thy royal kinswoman will wink at the manner thereof."

With futile, anguished pleading Mary implored to be sent ashore.

Little by little her first passionate outcries gave way

to unremitting, obdurate silence. An irrational but quenchless hope surged ever in her heart. Nikita, she was confident, would find some way of succour. All the long voyage he seemed strangely near, and every day brought her nearer his home.

Nikita was near indeed, speeding after in the fleet of the British Envoy.

"Pizemski must see our signals albeit he disregards them," muttered the Prince.

Fitting his eye to the telescope Sir Jerome scanned the scudding ship.

"Someone has run up a flag—Ha! by St. George, 'tis a woman!"

Snatching the glass Nikita cried, "Overtake them for love of Heaven ere it be too late!"

Sir Jerome Horsey was not over scrupulous. Of all worldly things he most cared for his own well-being, and self-interest plainly lay in carrying out the will of his Sovereign and furthering through his every action the coveted Russian alliance. Nevertheless British honour loomed even greater from his stubborn viewpoint than Britain's Queen. Never would he abide that a countrywoman of his should thus be sold a slave to a loathsome tyrant. Wherefore when his glass disclosed Mary struggling in the Russian's grip, the Britisher promptly sent a volley of grape across the Muscovite's bow.

Pizemski's answer was to put on more sail. Unfortu-

nately the English merchantman was not built for speed and moreover she was laden to the scuppers. Therefore the rakish Russian galleon speedily drew away and showed her pursuer a clean pair of heels.

Nevertheless Horsey refused obstinately to relinquish the chase. Throughout the long voyage the British lion loomed like a phantom on the track of the Russian bear.

By turns Mary's heart leaped with hope then sank in despair, till at last the British fleet was shrouded in the mists of the Murman Coast

V

IN THE TEREM¹

At last, after weeks of privation and suffering, the snow-crowned domes of the Monastery of St. Michael Archangel greeted Mary's weary sight. Here they disembarked and took sledge for Moscow.

A week later, gleaming mid sunset flames, Mary recognized that fairy phantasmagoria of multi-colored towers—the Kremlin. Blood-red, apple-green and gold, bulbous cupolas flashed before her wildered eyes. It seemed to her childlike fancy that a myriad monstrous fruits were heaped in rank confusion. Colossal pine-apples sprouted beneath the burnished saffron sky. Turbaned like Turks, scaled like dragons, they glittered with the tints of the rainbow.

¹ *Terem*, the women's apartments.

Climbing a red staircase Mary was led to an ante-chamber. Beckoning her to follow the *kliuchnitsa*¹ conducted her to a vaulted gallery where a little boy was playing ball.

Drawn by curiosity he ran forward and stroked the voyager's strange attire.

"What is thy name little boyar?" questioned Mary, opening a comfit box and offering him some sweets.

"Dimitri Ivanovitch," faltered the child, swallowing greedily and pleading eagerly for more.

A sudden growl issued from the doorway and a dark-browed woman strode forward, her eyes flashing flame.

"Nay, take him not," pleaded Mary, "so lone am I."

The Tsarina Marya loosed a torrent of imprecations. What had thus angered her Mary could scarce conjecture. She endeavoured to placate the mother with courteous words while she stroked the boy's hair.

Smiling wistfully little Dimitri strove to induce his mother to take Mary's hand, but the resentful Tsarina scorned the proffered courtesy and catching up the child strode angrily away.

"I am terrified here, in the Terem I cannot breathe;
My heart is not at rest: Black walls frown everywhere
Upon me,—even the servants look at me askance.
From far I hear the echoes of the master's pleasure,

¹ *Kliuchnitsa*, housekeeper.

The noise of his gaiety—This dreary palace is rife
With maudlin revel and laughter. Anon a silence of
The tomb broods over all. Death is everywhere.
Ever in the inmost recesses I hear secret rumours of
Assassination. Like a beast the Red Tsar takes my
Caresses. Never a kind or sympathetic word.
And as to my heart's vain-longing he never asks!"

OSTROVSKI.

Abandoned to loneliness Mary paced back and forth
a prey to vague foreboding. Her solitude was broken
by an uncouth figure limping toward her on a steel-
spiked staff.

A grizzled beard framed his sunken saffron cheeks.
As he drew nigh and ogled her with lack-lustre eyes,
Mary felt herself under the spell of a malignant demon.
But the pallid visage was regal even in its wreck, with
the malevolent majesty of Satan. His every trait pro-
claimed a relentless spirit, a will which would brook no
thwarting.

Realizing that this could be none other than the Red
Tsar Mary shrank in affright. He eyed her lustfully,
the veins swelled in his bull-neck and the yellow tusks
gleamed in a cruel smile. As his frigid fingers caressed
her cheek she felt herself falling into a swoon.

Marking the girl's repulsion Ivan played with her
ruthlessly.

"Pizemski did not lie when he dubbed thee beautiful,"
he laughed. "Hadst thou been uncomely I should have
slain thee forthwith!" He grasped the struggling girl.

"Fear not, my dainty *zakushka*,¹ too much thought of future joyance have I to drain thee at one draught; albeit I fain would thus. Nay, I will bide till the morrow, when wedded to me, Sweet Tsarina, thou shalt give thyself willingly!"

His fetid breath nauseated her; in vain she strove to release herself; the clawlike fingers clutched ever tighter.

"But one little kiss!" he pleaded, straining her to his heart. With a supreme effort she cast him off and struggled free. She resolved to temporize till help might come.

Masking her fright Mary summoned a pitiful smile.

"In mercy, Sire, I have had a tempestuous voyage and am o'er wearied! Of thy clemency suffer me to rest!"

"As thou wilt," he shrugged, "till tomorrow!"

Again the Tsar clutched her close. "One kiss," he hissed, "one last virgin kiss!" The fruit was in his grasp, "S'death! he would eat it now!"

By turns threatening, and cajoling, he strove to drag her to the terem.

With the strength of terror Mary clung shrieking to the door.

Infuriated he clutched and throttled, striving to stifle her cries.

Of a sudden from afar came a resounding shout.

¹ *Zakushka*, appetizer, the first course of a meal.

Mary strove in vain to answer, then swooning fell at the feet of the Tsar.

VI

FOILED

Nikita had been fortunate in his journey. Favoured by fair weather the fleet of Sir Jerome anchored at Rose Island¹ only a day later than the Russian galleon, and he had followed post haste to Moscow.

Arrived at the Kremlin Nikita was told the Tsar was holding audience with the ambassador.

"My place is here," he protested, and thrusting the guard aside rushed up the stairway.

Midway of the flight he brushed sleeves with a descending courtier.

"Well met, my friend," greeted Pizemski, striving to conceal a roll of parchment.

"I will settle thine affair anon," returned Nikita, mounting the stairway.

"Hold!" cried the other. "Here is a warrant for thine arrest! Thou art my prisoner!"

"Not till thou hast caught me," laughed Nikita, drawing his rapier.

Pizemski paused. There was something sinister in the face of the youth so calmly baring his sword arm.

¹ Rose Island at the mouth of the Dwina, near the present city of Archangel, had been assigned to the British merchants as their factory.



House of Nikita Romanoff, Moscow

Copyright Underwood & Underwood, New York

"Seize him, Guards!" he commanded in a quavering voice.

With lowered pikes the opritchniks rushed up the steps, but ere they gained the top their leader drew back fearing to engage at a disadvantage.

Nikita laughed scornfully. "Pizemski deposes his quarrel to mercenaries. To whom will ye depute it?"

The diplomat forced an ugly smile. "One does not grant a criminal the honour of combat," he shrugged.

Smiling grimly, Nikita was making ready to force the issue when a sudden shriek cut the air.

Springing up the stairs he gained the gallery and with drawn blade confronted the Tsar.

"She is my lawful bride," he fawned; "she came of her own free will!"

"Madman, thou liest! The Lady Mary is my wife." Then calmly, deliberately, he struck the Tsar full upon the face.

Ivan fell like a stone.

Spurning him with his foot, Nikita bent over the lifeless girl.

The courtyard rang with cries: "Thief! Murderer! Assassin!" Opritchniks were rushing up the stairway. Flight by way he had come was impossible. Bearing Mary in his arms he rushed down the gallery, entered an ante-chamber and laid her upon a divan.

The terem teemed with confusion. The Tsarina had received an order of banishment to the castle of Uglitch.

*Kliuchniks*¹ were bearing out chests, an escort of mounted opritchniks waited without the gate.

Out of the sea of oblivion the tide of life flowed back. Opening her eyes Mary beheld Nikita bending over her anxiously.

"I have found thee at last," he murmured, caressing her tenderly.

Tears of joy welled in her eyes.

"Don't cry, pitty Lady," piped little Dimitri; "it hurts me so inside."

"None may issue from the palace save my suite," explained the Tsarina, "but in the guise of Dimitri's nurse thou shalt go with me!"

"Go," counselled Nikita. "Her palace is the last place wherein the Tsar would seek thee."

Hastily robing Mary in the raiment of the nurse, they descended to a gateway where waited a troika.

"Fear not, for I will come," smiled Nikita, bidding his wife farewell. Jealous of her caress, little Dimitri burst into tears. Lifting the child Nikita clasped his little arms about Mary's neck. Her face thus concealed, unsuspected by the guards, she entered the sledge.

"An hundred roubles, Mikhail, if we reach the post by sundown!" cried the Tsarina. A flick of the whip and the three steeds made off at a gallop. His hair streaming in the breeze, the driver urged them onward with frenzied Tartar cries.

¹ *Kliuchniks*, stewards.

Nikita descended a spiral stairway to a postern gate.

"None may quit the terem," muttered a guard.

"Who dares to bar my way?" demanded Nikita indignantly.

"That do I," cried Pizemski emerging from behind an archway.

Instantly Nikita drew. Slashing him on the crown he blinded Pizemski with the flow of blood. A guard attacked him from behind, but, wheeling suddenly, Nikita skewered his man. Though the thrust went home it was ill-timed. Ere he had withdrawn his blade, two opritchniks leaped over their comrade's body. The first engaged Nikita with furious thrusts, while the second stealthily strove to get behind him.

With two lightning sword-strokes Nikita sent the first reeling to his knees; the second dropped his pike and fled, his severed hand still clutching the shaft.

"Come coward!" taunted Nikita, "ere I build a wall too high for thine o'erleaping."

But still Pizemski paused. The while Nikita waited, guards sprang upon him from behind and disarmed him. In a trice the opritchniks had their prisoner trussed, his arms stoutly bound behind his back.

"Well done!" shouted Ivan from a balcony. "Bring forth the Lady Mary that I may render sentence on the guilty lovers!"

"Sire," stammered a guard, "the Barina cannot be found. She hath vanished none knoweth whither!"

The Tsar's face was livid. "Where hast thou hidden her?" he demanded. Nikita gave no answer. "Thou wilt not speak? Marry, I have that will loosen thy tongue. Guards! to the Sloboda with him. Death of your slowest and craftiest that I may gloat upon his agony. Let him taste such torture as shall make hell seem Paradise. S'blood! we shall have merry entertainment this night!"

VII

ST. GEORGE TO THE RESCUE

Meantime the troika of the Tsarina galloped on unhindered. Learning that their route passed the estates of Nikita, taking leave of her protectress, Mary hastened thither.

Here a bitter disappointment awaited her.

Only a day before Ivan's opritchniks had burned the castle and massacred the tenantry. Long syne had Nikita set free his serfs, and though they might have fled the peasants chose death in defence of the property of their *barin*.¹

Within a half-burned hay-rick smouldered the bare body of a woman, the flames still glowing in her hair. About the rick ran wolf-tracks and beyond lay a mangled babe, drained white of its blood. Hard by Mary encountered a peasant moaning bitterly.

¹ *Barin*, master.

"Who art thou, and why dost thou weep?" she questioned.

"I am Kostya, the forester of Prince Nikita," he made answer. "Wife and child, Barina, all that I possess have they taken from me!"

Aiding the man to dig a shallow grave and place therein the bodies, Mary breathed a prayer:

"May Heaven requite thy suffering and deal avengement."

"Amen," echoed the other.

"Who art thou, Barina?" questioned the moujik in turn.

"I am thy lord's most unhappy wife," replied Mary. "Hither will he surely quest me, and here will I await him."

"Here also will I bide, Barina, and care for thee till the Prince cometh."

Kostya led Mary to the hunting lodge, which by good fortune had escaped destruction, where they laboured together, fishing, hunting, and trapping till, with the Russian's devotion, the fugitives returned to the ruined estate.

Tending the children, comforting the aged, and toiling cheerfully, Mary waited vainly the coming of her lord.

On a day when hope was well-nigh dead a telega drew up at the gate and from its curtained recesses descended a portly figure. Well knowing that this was none other than Sir Jerome Horsey, Envoy of Queen Elizabeth, Mary welcomed him gladly.

"I have traced thee at last, Lady Mary," he greeted, "albeit through what difficulties and dangers it boots not here to tell. Come with me, gracious Princess, that I find thee more fitting housing."

"Not to the Tsar," she shuddered, shrinking from the proffered hand.

"God forbid!" he ejaculated. "To merry England where shalt thou find refuge from that madman."

"Nay, the Queen would grant me no protection, since she did commission thee to barter me with Ivan. Belike thou knowest not I am wedded to Prince Nikita."

"Aye, he told me as much," he blurted in answer, "the while we chased thee so merrily. Fear not, dear Lady, that I surrender thee to the Queen; for where'er floateth the flag of St. George, there is England. Wherefore come forthwith to my embassy where shalt thou be safe."

Seeing that she was incredulous, he flushed suddenly. "Why think you I fired on the Russian ship?" he questioned, twirling his cap like a schoolboy. "Well knew I when I gave command 'twas like to spell my ruin with the Tsar, yet did I not hesitate."

"It was incredible," flashed Mary, reflecting how the envoy's every interest lay.

"Ay, when Pizemski accused me, none would credit him. He must have mistaken for mine the galleon of some Danish corsair, I maintained impudently,

and by this ready subterfuge was cleared of the accusation."

Mary started. "You acknowledge you are a liar, yet expect me to trust you?"

Sir Jerome faltered in evident distress. His jowls quivered and he mopped great beads from his brow.

"Believe me or not, gentle Lady, thou art in direst danger, but, by the lance of St. George, while Jerome Horsey liveth not a lock of thy lovesome head shall suffer scathe!"

"Tell me, doth my lord lie in like peril?" she questioned white-lipped.

"Marry in parlous danger!" and the good knight recounted, how for her dear sake Nikita had withstood untold torment rather than reveal her hiding-place.

"In the hope of wringing from him the secret, they will suffer him to live; but at last when they find thee, most surely will he die."

Mary steadied herself on the knight's arm. "Nay, that he shall not!" she exclaimed, "though I yield myself to the Tsar as surety for his life."

Sir Jerome looked at her in wonder. "Nikita will never willingly accept thy sacrifice," he protested.

"Once my lord is safe," she smiled, "death shall release me!"

Horsey shook his head in surly dissent. "Nay, gentle Lady, cozen the Tsar we will, but otherwise. Dost thou trust me now?"

Scanning his steady eyes Mary beheld his soul leap eagerly to the first disinterested act in a sordid life.

"Indeed, I do trust thee!" she murmured, as throwing about her a caftan he lifted her to the telega.

"Haste we to the embassy," he laughed exultantly, "for by St. George, champion of distressed damsels, ne'er shall I yield thee to the loathly Russian dragon!"

Mayhap the good knight was none too confident at heart, notwithstanding no trace of perturbation was visible in his demeanour. For the audience he had tricked himself out in most resplendent apparel. A scarlet cap with flaunting peacock's feather concealed his shining pate. A diamond-studded insignia, the gift of the merchants of London, rose and fell upon his portly chest. The jewel-hilted rapier with which the Queen had dubbed him Knight, entangled itself somewhat awkwardly with his arrogant stride, but a smile inscrutable curled his lips while with half-closed lids he eyed the Tsar presumptuously.

"Knave," growled Ivan, "I caused the hat of the French ambassador to be nailed to his head for like discourtesy, yet thou darest thus thrust thyself covered into my presence!"

"The Ambassador of France," returned Sir Jerome, "had the misfortune to serve a King incapable of defending his subjects. Whereas, my implacable sovereign,

Elizabeth, well knoweth how to requite an insult paid the humblest servant of her realm!"

The Tsar fumbled with impotent hands. "What is thy business, Sirrah? Of a surety, thou camest not hither to threaten me!"

"That is as it may be," smiled Horsey unaffronted, "know then, all-puissant but irritable tyrant, that my gracious mistress deigneth to accept thy suit, and in surety thereof I am come with a goodly fleet laden with divers inventions which England knoweth so well to fabricate, excelling the contraptions of thy backward country as day out-shineth night."

"Unless my ears deceived me," insinuated Ivan with an ironic smile, "somewhat was said of a bride."

"Of a surety," assented the envoy with alacrity, and unrolling a parchment on which glittered the seal of England—"Thus speaketh her gracious and virtuous Majesty, Elizabeth, to-wit:

"Whereas, the most noble and majestical Tsar, Ivan Vassilivitch, Emperor of all the Russias, hath graciously condescended to accept as his imperial spouse in lieu of our proper person our kinswoman, Mary Hastings; Wherefore, not to be outdone in courtesy in accepting this alliance will we absolve his lordly Tsarship from thus demeaning himself. To this effect, we hereby accept as proxy for the Emperor, his kinsman, the very noble Prince Nikita Romanovitch. Wherefore, have we united the said Lord Nikita and our cousin, Mary

Hastings in holy matrimony thus cementing the alliance between our countries.'"

Thus far had the Tsar listened in wonderment, but of a sudden he burst forth:

"Hold, presumptuous knave! Tell thy haughty mistress and the wench, Mary Hastings, that as my envoy, was empowered to act as my proxy, therefore, in wedding him, she hath contracted herself to me. Moreover, unless this they both humbly avow, the Prince shall perish on the rack!"

Ivan leered as he witnessed Sir Jerome's discomfiture. Despite his audacious forgery, St. George had been vanquished by the Dragon!

VIII

A GAME WITH DEATH

The end hath come! The bitter end of all!
What brings the grievous road of majesty?
What travellers have I met? Sorrow alone
And haggard ghosts of dread adversity.
A life of dire unrest from early youth
Curbing my steed the whistling shot amidst
The heathen rebels striving to subject.
Anon in council 'gainst the boyars bold
An endless strife! Behind me naught I see
But red, relentless days and sleepless nights.
I have not over lenient been to men.
Nay, I was never even master o'er myself.

My tutor oft would say: "Ivan, beware:
Satan would seat him in thy citadel!"
But I was deaf to all his holy prayer,
And oped my soul to Satan's sophistries.
I am not worthy to be called the Tsar.
No Tsar am I, a wolf, a loathly cur.
A bloody tyrant and a murderer!
My dearest son I slew. The brand of Cain
Must ever mark me out from human kind
A leper vile in body, soul and mind,
Whose countless sins do eat away my heart.
O, great God Christ; heal thou my deadly crime
And in thy boundless pity shrive my soul!

ALEXIS TOLSTOI.

His face white as parchment, propped in a lofty sedile sat the Tsar, lips mumbling, talon-like fingers tapping incessantly.

"I am weary," he moaned, breaking a long silence, "life loseth savour, 'tis a game I have played exceeding ill."

"But since thou hast repented of thy sins," comforted the Tsarevitch, "the church doth grant thee absolution."

Ivan shook his head dubiously: "Despite the gold I have given the monks, I doubt 'twill suffice, for the devil driveth a keen bargain."

"Methinks, Sire, thou wert not alway thus humble," sneered Pizemski. "In sooth I did scan thy visage as the torture wrung the groans from Nikita. Faith, that was a game worth playing. Albeit this day shalt thou behold e'en braver sport. Rest hath renewed the strength

of our victim so that full many a torment will he endure ere death releaseth him from agony."

Ivan glanced furtively from one horror-stricken face to another.

"Die he shall, albeit I am glutton of my blood-lust, for there was that in the prisoner's eyes which minded me of his dead sister. Nor will the death torture wring from him the secret of Mary's hiding-place."

"Faith, Sire, that can I advertise thee easily," smiled Pizemski. "Even now the Lady Mary waiteth without, craving audience."

"Hear I aright?" cried Ivan. "Of free will the damsel thus doth render herself to me?"

"'Tis sooth, Sire," and throwing wide the door he gave entrance to a white-faced figure.

Gripping the chair-arms Ivan gaped in wordless wonderment, then questioned incredulously: "Wouldst have audience with me alone, Barina?"

"Nay, your Majesty, before all thy household for I would fain have witnesses to my bargain."

"Bargain!" roared Ivan. "What mayst thou give that is not mine by right?"

Mary quavered a moment under his glance, then resumed: "Well know I, Sire, 'tis not my paltry person thou dost covet, but an English alliance. What thy heart craveth thou shalt have."

The eyes of the Tsar gleamed greedily. "And in return?" he questioned.

"Release forthwith my lord; pledge thy sworn word that neither in body nor estate shall he suffer scathe! Whereafter slay me if thou wilt, or prison me for life within nunnery walls."

"S'death! if thou but lovedst me thus!" he muttered, then angrily: "Haughty Lady, thy terms like me not. All or none will I. If this thou givest thy lover shall go free. If not thou shalt be thrust 'neath the ice of Volga, but not to drown, for, ere life hath quitted thy body, ravenous pike shall tear thee limb from limb!"

Abasing her eyes Mary bowed her head in seeming submission, but in her heart she prayed: "Rather, good Lord, suffer that I yield myself bride of the pike!" Then glided silently from the room.

The Tsar pondered in deep dilemma: "The alliance! Ay, they have me there. Not alone must I secure Mary's renunciation of her marriage, but that of Nikita as well."

He rang a silver bell, an Opritchnik entered silently.

"Fetch me hither the prisoner!" Ivan commanded, "nor delay lest death balk me of my will."

With folded arms Nikita faced his persecutor. "What further torment hast thou in store?" he demanded bitterly.

"Hearken Fool!" cried the Tsar. "But two games are worth the playing—war and chess. In each of these art thou no paltry player. I mind me how in days gone-by none other might mate thee. We shall see if

the Tsar hath lost his cunning. What sayest thou, shall the beauteous Mary be the stake?"

Nikita was silent. "Heaven forfend that I risk such a venture," he thought.

"Haste, thine answer," urged the Tsar. "An thou playest not thy life be forfeit. An thou winnest, liberty and the maid be thine. An thou lovest, thy head shall rot on the Kremlin wall, whiles I take thy widow to wife!"

Comprehending this his sole course, Nikita took up the gage.

The Tsar bade a kliuchnik bring his golden board and niello chess-men.

"Summon my household," he commanded, "that they judge if the game be fairly played."

Whereupon the Tsarevitch, Tsarevna, Pizemski, and the Italian physician entered.

"Watch ye all!" cried Ivan. "We play for the bride of the terem. Let the winner have her to wife."

In grim and ominous silence they began the fateful game. Opening with the Queen's gambit, his wonted lead, Nikita after cautious manœuvring gave check to the Black King with his Castle. Thereupon the Tsar with his Knight captured Nikita's Castle, placing the White Queen in peril.

"I' faith, long syne I burned thy Castle," laughed Pizemski.

"Silence, dog!" growled the Tsar as Nikita withdrew his Queen from jeopardy.



"The Bride of the Terem."

By V. Makovski, permission *Art and Archaeology*

Back and forth flowed the tide of conflict, with advantage to neither contestant. Wearied to the death by his recent ordeal, Nikita played recklessly. Of a sudden moving his Queen forward, he gave check to the Black King.

Ivan scrabbled in his beard.

"'Tis check and mate!" insisted his opponent.

"Nay, Sire," protested Pizemski, as the Tsar appealed for judgment, "verily thou still canst castle and thus the game be thine."

Ivan smiled triumphantly.

Comprehending that he had lost, Nikita rose. "I will throttle him with bare hands," he thought.

Of a sudden the Black King fell from the palsied fingers of the Tsar.

"S'dearth!" he muttered, "the King will no longer stand!"

With a crash he swept the board. His head fell limply on his breast. His eyes rolled in their sockets. He strove in vain to speak. A bloody froth oozed from his lips.

Bending anxiously over him the Italian physician opened a vein in his arm, but the stagnant blood refused to flow.

Crossing the lifeless hands he murmured gravely: "*La comedia e finita!*"

The door opened and a radiant figure, crowned with the golden glory of a Muscovite bride, with a smothered cry, swayed trembling into her lover's arms.

AFTERMATH

O lustrous summer moon, serene and white,
Why shinest thou not now as oft before?
Why hidest thou beneath the veil of night?
Nor gleams thy smiling face as erst of yore?

It thus befell in ancient Russia holy,
In Moscow great, the massive stone-built town,
Abode of boyars proud and moujiks lowly,
Shrine of dim, golden days of high renown.

Above Archangel Michael's lofty portal
Tolls the great, royal bell its dirge afar,
Sounding the requiem of the soul immortal
Of Ivan Vassil'vitch, "the Holy Tsar!"

The Princes and the people swiftly hastened,
Young maidens and old warriors grim and grey,
Within the cold cathedral, hushed and chastened,
To kneel in awe and tremblingly to pray.

With ruthless smile and features unforgiving,
Inscrutable and dark like some dead star,
More terrible in death than e'er in living,
Lies Ivan Vassil'vitch, the holy Tsar!

Before his head a golden cross is gleaming,
Beside it shines the great imperial crown,
About the corse burn candles brightly beaming,
And at his feet his sword of high renown.

Before the catafalque the bishops holy
Bestow the benediction on his head,
With bated breath and genuflexions lowly,
For Ivan, "holiest of Tsars," is dead!

Old Russian Song.

After the demise of the ruthless Tsar, during the brief reign of the weakling Feodor, Nikita shared the regency with Boris Godunuf.

But upon the new Tsar's death Boris usurped the empire, ruling alone in behalf of the infant prince Dimitri. Only this little child stood between him and the throne! The temptation was too great.

On a day the while little Dimitri disported himself, twining a chaplet of roses in the garden of Uglitch, he piped this plaintive lay :

The Christ-child made a garden fair,
With wondrous roses, bright and gay;
And watered them both night and day,
To weave a chaplet for his hair.

Full many a flower he planted there,
And, when they bloomed in bright array,
He bade the children come and play,
His wonder-blooms to freely share.

They strip't the roses from the bed
And left the garden bare and brown.
"Thy pretty flowers are dead!" they said,
"How wilt thou weave thyself a crown?"

"One little thing, ye have forgot:
The thorns are left!" the Christ-child said,
And plaited him a prickly crown,
And laid it on his kingly head,
A garland weft of briars brown
With drops of blood for roses red!

PLESHCHEEV.

Behind the wall listening to the boy's childish prattle, lurked an Opritchnik. Leaping the barrier the bravo suddenly confronted the child.

"'Tis a strange head-gear thou wearest," he whispered stroking Dimitri's brow.

"'Tis my crown of thorns," smiled the boy trustfully.

A sudden flash, a pitiful moan, and the assassin fled.

From every quarter of the Palace ran distressed servants. Bearing the dying Prince they laid him on his mother's breast. But the Christ-like child had given his soul to God.

NOTES TO CHAPTER V

Nikita-Romanovitch Zakharine, brother of Ivan's wife, Anastasia, holds a high place in the affection of the Russian people. "Legend endows him," says Walizewski, "with a generous and loyal heart and a pure and upright mind incompatible with his surroundings. He was a member of the inner council of three and carried forward the treaties with Queen Elizabeth for the marriage of the Tsar with Mary Hastings."

Jerome Horsey in his *Travels*, printed from his own manuscript for the Hakluyt Society, gives many details of Nikita's life, from which we have drawn.

As the English envoy so quaintly puts it:

His Majestie cast his displeasure upon Nikita Romanovitch and toke from him all his armor, horses, plate and goodes to the value of 40,000 pounds, seased his lands and



“’Tis my Crown of Thorns,” Smiled Little Dimitri, Gazing
up Trustfully

M. Nesterov

From *The Russian Arts*, by Rosa Newmarch, permission Herbert
Jenkins. Ltd., London

left him pore and needye. His grandson is now crowned Emperower. God send him long reign with better success than his predecessours. For he cometh upon great disadvantage for want of treasure. My company hath offered him the lone of 100,000 pounds, a remembrance for the love his ancestor hath shewed toward them!

Horsey first went to Russia as agent of the Company of British Merchants. He ingratiated himself with both Elizabeth and the Tsar and was employed by them in secret negotiations. He was remarkable for his tact, resourcefulness, and amazing impudence, which served him in good stead in many tight places.

The Tsarevitch, little Dimitri, was laid to rest in the great Archangel Michael Cathedral, by the side of his father, the Red Tsar.

In after years arose a pretender, the false Dimitri, who, supported by a Polish army, deposed and slew Godunuf, then reigned for a space till he in turn was murdered.

CHAPTER VI

THE QUEST OF THE CIRCLING SEAS

MEMORIES

To night's cool breath the casement wide I throw
Kneeling enraptured in the sultry gloom,
Rife with the languorous scent of lilac bloom,
Wafted aloft from fragrant boughs below.
A wondrous plaint of love's delirious woe,
The nightingale pours forth her wistful strain,
Waking within my heart a yearning vain
For vanished golden days of long ago.

Alas, those fragrant flowers of gardens fair
And perished blooms of purple lilac bright!
How clear the summer night's enchanted air
Brings back my swift-flown youth in memory
Of long-lost golden days of love and thee
And vanished dreams of life's serene delight!

GRAND DUKE CONSTANTINE.

FOREWORD

LONG, long ago in my dusky garden, so long that the lilac-shrubs have now grown to trees, four of Russia's foremost actors played their drama of deathless love.

And never may I breathe the languorous scent of lilacs but I am wafted back to those long-lost golden days, to a green, cloistered garth in Livonia girt round

by the scarlet fires of war. So pure was this peaceful haven that for a space the flames drew back, seemingly fearful to invade its sanctuary.

But a brief respite, then the call of arms and lure of the Court gripped me anew. Only of late has life vouchsafed me, Alexander Danilovitch Menchikoff, having long battled with weltering seas, to anchor at last in a tranquil haven.

Thus may I now look back upon my perilous voyage since first my imperial master made me helmsman of the Ship of State.

The glorious exploits of Tsar Peter Alexeivitch Romanoff,¹ and the treachery of that spawn of Satan, Mazeppa, are known to all, but the secret story of a wife's devotion is known to none save me. As beneath the foaming billows lurk dark, resistless tides, so in the course of the mighty captain there were hidden currents 'gainst which he vainly struggled compelling him ruthlessly to their will.

Strangest of these I count the jewel of the Sea-King, the talismanic Key unlocking to its possessor the great sea-oceans, which incredible tale I will now relate.

I

THE JEWEL OF THE SEA-KING

From his boyhood the Tsarina Nathalia was wont to enthrall her son with the *bylinas* and

¹ Peter I., surnamed the Great, 1682-1725.

skazki.¹ But the tale boyish Peter best loved, which even lured him from favourite sports, was Sadko and the Daughter of the Sea-King.

“Long years ago,” began the Tsarina, “in royal Novgorod, dwelt a youth named Sadko, who played so sweetly upon the gusly that the Sprite of the Volga oft would lift her beauteous head from the waves to hearken his minstrelsy.

“Upon a day her father, the all-Puissant Sea-King, appeared to Sadko as he sat playing upon the river-bank, and tossed a jewel to his feet.

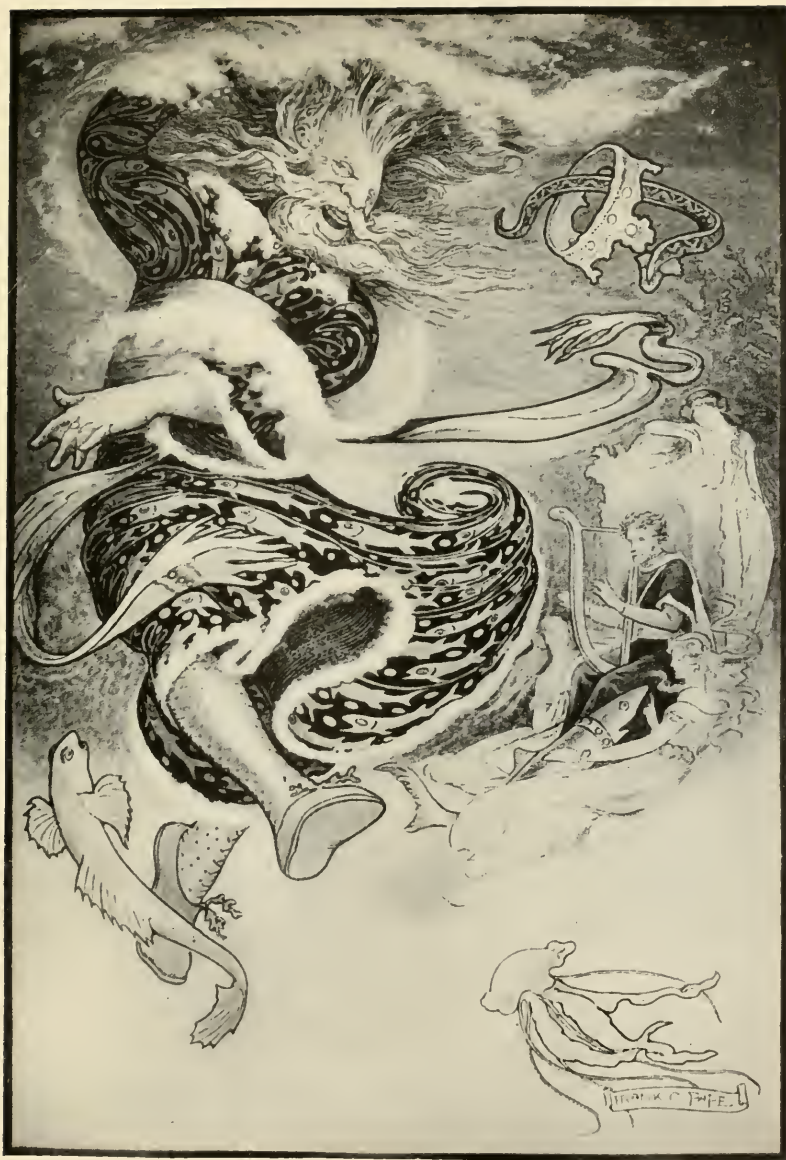
“‘Behold,’ he cried, ‘the key to the sea-oceans! My lovesome Daughter hath deigned to favour thee. Come then to our watery kingdom and abide there forever in love and felicity!’

“Sadko, nothing loth, did as the ancient Sea-King bade, descending beneath the waves of Mother Volga to a wondrous coral-chambered castle where he wedded the lovely water-sprite. Whereupon the father gave his daughter as dowry the little Sea of Azof. On its sun-kissed strand Sadko builded a splendid palace, wherein the lovers dwelt long time in unremitting bliss.

“But upon a day the lovesome sprite yearned for her watery home, and without so much as a word of adieu, fled.

“Whereupon Sadko turned the magic jewel in his fingers. Of a sudden a door opened in a mighty billow.

¹ *Bylina*, epic poem; *skazki*, legend and fairy tale.



"Thereupon the Sea King whirled about in a frenzied dance, waving the skirts of his caftan and gesticulating joyously."

By Frank C. Papé

From the *Russian Story Book* by Dr. Richard Wilson, permission MacMillan & Co.

"Sadko entered and pursuing his fleeting bride through the endless tortuous crypts of four sea-oceans, at last found her in the palace of the Sea-King.

"'In sooth, Sadko, thou art a master-player on the gusly,' smiled the monarch, 'prithee play for me upon thy harp of maplewood.'

"Sadko perceived he could do no other than heed the behest of the Sea-King, wherefore, setting his harp in tune, he plucked the strings right merrily. Thereupon the ancient sovereign whirled round in a dizzy dance, waving the skirts of his caftan, and gesticulating frenziedly the while lovesome sea-maidens disported about him in a choral dance, laughing with unrestrained merriment.

"The heart of the Sea-King's daughter beat in tune to Sadko's playing, so that forthwith with sweet blandishment he won her back; whereafter they dwelt in love and felicity in the coral-chambered castle beneath the sea!"

"*Matyushka*,¹ I will do as Sadko," laughed little Peter, "I will sail to the Southern Sea and wed the daughter of the Sea-King; but he shall give me not one little sea, but all the great Sea-Oceans!"

The Tsarina shook her head. "That may you not, *Shishenka*,² for you have no ships. Moreover, the Northern Sea is locked by icebergs, the Tatars hold the key to the Southern, thou warrest now for the Western,

¹ *Matyushka*, little mother.

² *Shishenka*, little darling.

and of the Eastern Sea knoweth man naught, not even its name!"¹

"Is it sooth," questioned Peter, "that our land is girdled by four sea-oceans yet possesseth none?"

"'Tis sooth, Petrushka," assented Nathalia sadly.

The boy pondered a moment. "Little Mother, a fleet of an hundred ships shall I build, wherewith I will wrest the key from the Tatars and unlock our prisoning seas."

II

THE BOY TSAR

"*Oladi, blintzi!*"² Who'll buy, who'll buy?" Thus sang I, Alexasha Menchikoff, pastry-cook's apprentice, bare-footed but lusty of voice as I trudged the streets of Moscow crying my toothsome wares.

Attracted by my song, a youthful boyar rounded a corner and, seizing my tray, helped himself uncere-
moniously to its contents.

I protested manfully, belabouring the lad soundly and bedaubing him with pastries, until my pretty popinjay resembled a sanguine mass of tarts.

Of a sudden my arms were pinioned by an equerry, who led the youthful robber to the river brink and washed the stains of conflict from his woeful countenance.

¹ The Northern, the Arctic Ocean; the Southern, the Black; the Western, the Baltic; the Eastern, Bering Sea.

² *Oladi*, fritters; *blintzi*, pancakes.

The Quest of the Circling Seas 173

With wrath unappeased I shook my fist and demanded reparation.

"This will requite thee fully," retorted the princeling, tossing me a purse. "In sooth, 'tis shame I spoiled thy pies," he made apology, "they were full toothsome and better suit the inside than the outside of my face,"—and embarking in a skiff he oared swiftly down the Moskwa.

It was the Boy-Tsar, Peter, who, to the great distress of the Tsarina, had grown to a truculent lad with a habit of forming friendships according to his liking. Thus it chanced that I, humble pastry-cook's apprentice, forthwith became sworn comrade of the youthful Emperor.

Thereafter he took me to his summer-palace at Preobrajenskoie where Petrushka builded a model fortress and, mustering a company of valorous youths, led them to its assault. Mighty battles waged we both by land and sea. Discovering an abandoned Dutch boat on the lake,¹ which, unlike our Russian vessels might even sail against the wind, Peter became so enamoured of sailing that he forsook all other sports.

Soon, however, the lake proved too small for the youthful but ambitious navigator. The lure of the sea tugged at his heart and roused his lust of dominion. When he came of age we journeyed to Archangel, and

¹ This famous boat, known as "The Little Grandsire of the Russian Fleet," was built by Kerslem Brandt, a Dutchman, and is still to be seen in the Fortress at Petrograd.

having built a sloop we launched forth upon a voyage of discovery. Three hundred versts we voyaged to the icebound Arctic, when a sudden tempest swept us out of our course and forced us reluctantly to turn back.

"Again will I make trial," Peter told the helmsman. "I will coast round the Northern land till I find the Nameless Sea!"

The Dane's eyes lighted: "By the red beard of Rurik, I will sail with thee," he promised, "an thou build a sea-worthier ship!"

"Where build they best?" demanded Petrushka.

"In Holland, forsooth," retorted the helmsman.

"Thither shall we journey, Alexasha; when we have learned their secrets will we build a fleet and conquer the circling seas!" Eyeing the sailor eagerly: "What is your name?" Peter demanded.

"Vitus Bering, Sire, Master pilot at thy service. I pray thee take me on thy voyage to the Nameless Ocean!"

"That will I, right willingly," promised the Boy Tsar, "and we will name it in thine honour—Bering Sea!"

III

LOVE IN A LILAC GARDEN

I will not attempt to chronicle the golden years of adolescence—during which we toiled together, making ready to embark upon the great adventure—Life.

It sufficeth to say that Peter had now become sole autocrat of all the Russias, and would brook no thwart-

ing of his imperial will. But never a controversy stemmed the course of the ship of State, since the goal of its helmsman was the same as its master, namely, to free beleaguered Russia from the prisoning seas.

Thereupon we waged a ruthless conflict with a life-long foe, Emperor Charles of Sweden, for the supremacy of the Baltic.

Out of the raging hell of battle, which terminated in the victory of Marienberg, there came to me the vision of wondrous womanhood which has blessed and ennobled all my life.

Long, arduous, and unrelenting had been the siege, but at last our cannon battered the massive walls to fragments and put the town to flame. Waving flags of truce a horde of terror-stricken refugees fled from the flaming city.

Riding through the gates I bade my soldiery extinguish the fires and attempt to restore order. This was no light task, for from over-jutting stories the Livonians poured down upon us a ceaseless rain of missiles. My charger was shot beneath me and my troops, enraged beyond restraint, gave themselves over to loot and rapine. Wherefore was I solicitous for a fair Livonian maiden whom I discerned struggling through the maddened soldiery in a futile effort to re-enter the town. Whatever valuables she might hope to recover were of scant worth compared to the maid's safety, thought I, as I hailed her peremptorily to halt.

But my shout served only to give fleeter wings to her feet. Through street and lane she sped the while I pursued like hound after hart. Of a sudden she rounded a corner and was lost to view.

Groping blindly along the winding walls I came to a garden of blossoming lilacs, and peering through a grille, beheld my fair Eurydice bearing a roll of parchment.

Vaulting the wall I lighted amidst the lilacs and confronted the astonished maiden. Unaffrighted, she arched her ripe, red lips in a witching smile. Her eyes met mine in a defiant flash, but melted anon as she sensed that I bore her no malice.

"*Barishnya*,¹ thou wert o'er reckless to return to town for thy title-deeds, and thus tempt my troopers with a double prize."

"These be but the pastor's sermons, Barin," she laughed. "Forsooth, they would find them but dry booty."

At that instant came a terrific crash and a blinding explosion. It seemed as though the very firmament were riven and the earth shaken to its foundations.

"Rather than surrender," she gasped, "have they blown up the fortress?"

Through the mass of débris that lay heaped about us, I searched vainly to find passage.

"Trapped!" I muttered, "the conflagration hems us about on all sides!"

¹ *Barishnya*, Miss.



The "Man-Tsar," Peter Alexeivitch Romanoff

"He looked the King from head to toe."

From a print by J. Smith, after a picture by Kneller, permission J. O. Wright

"Nay, follow me," called the girl, unbolting a postern gate.

As I strove to keep pace with her flying footsteps a sudden lassitude overcame me and I sank to the ground.

"Thou art wounded!" she cried, clasping her strong arms about me and lifting me as though I were but a child.

Bearing me back to the Manse, she laid me upon a bed. With a mother's tenderness she staunched my wound and ministered to my pain.

Happily the flood of flame was kept at safe distance by the lilac-bowered garden in which the cottage was islanded. By good fortune there was food and drink in the cellars. For days we waited praying Heaven for succour. At last the conflagration subsided and my faithful troopers breached the smoking ruins and rescued us feeble but living from the raging hell.

Henceforth the maid, Catharine, and I became comrades inseparable. Captive of my bow and spear, so I dubbed her, but in my secret heart I knew myself the willing captive of the beauteous serf.

IV

THE MAN TSAR

Along a steep and tortuous trail
By Neva's mighty flood,
Through lonely wilds of wood and vale
A weary horseman rode.

Beneath a towering pine-tree vast
By Neva's turbid tide,
A fisher o'er a broken mast
His shining hatchet plied.

The horseman spied the fisher there,
"Good Finn," he cried, "Good-day!
How goes the catch and tell me where
You sell your finny prey?"

To him the man, with face of stone:—
"The fish are scarce and small,
And other market have I none
But yonder village hall.

"And how a man may fish pray tell,
In such a beastly row,
In your fool fight a cursed shell
Has burst my shallop's prow!"

From off his steed the horseman sprang,
The fisher's tools he grasped,
And merrily the hammer rang
The while he set the mast.

"'Tis done, my Friend, thy boat behold!
Set forth on Neva's main
And in the name of Peter bold
Cast forth thy net again!"

Then mused the fisher long and low,
As forth the horseman ran:
"He looked a king from head to toe,
But hammered—like a man!"

MAYKOV.

All unknown to the horseman, secret eyes had espied him the while he thus adroitly set the mast. The boughs parted and Catharine stepped from hiding and greeted the astonished Tsar.

"Well done, Sir Carpenter," she laughed; "when first I marked that jewel on thy finger I thought thee a worthless boyar, but in sooth thy work proclaims thee a man!"

"Look at these hands," protested Peter, displaying the calloused palms of a workman.

"Then who art thou?" questioned the maid in bewilderment.

"Peter Baas, shipwright and pilot," smiled the stranger. "But, albeit thou hast dubbed me a worthless boyar, I should do thee scant courtesy did I call thee other than Tsarina, for in sooth there be none fitter by grace and beauty to wear the golden crown."

With that, lifting her in his arms he bussed her lustily upon the mouth, deeming himself well requited for the resounding buffet which she bestowed upon him.

The while he pursued the fleeing damsel with gentle gallantries forthwith she slackened pace, and albeit she ceased not to berate him, eyed his goodly person with kindly eyes.

"I will advertise my master of thy discourtesy," she threatened.

"And I will certify the Tsar of thine," he retorted.

"A fig for thy vaunting," she scoffed. "Thou hast

little converse in such lofty places, though rumour has it that this Peter is but a simple-hearted craftsman."

"Verily that he is, even as myself."

"Yet, sooth be said, he knoweth well how to requite a service," admitted the maid, "since he did bestow upon my master, Alexander Danilovitch, yon vast estate, having wit to choose a man with a head upon his shoulders."

"Since it chanceth that I have business with thy barin," smiled the Tsar, "mount behind me wench; thither will we ride together!"

"The likes of thee may not enter the portal," she protested. "Wend we to the kitchens, moujik."

"The kitchens like me well," he laughed, "since thither we go together."

Thus chanced it, shortly after, that in the scullery, I found the Tsar wooing most blithely the maiden whom I hoped to make my wife.

Catharine sat at the samovar serving him countless glasses of tea, while, bending till his dark curls mingled with her golden tresses, he poured I know not what flattery into her willing ears.

Then, as I was about to burst upon them in wrathful remonstrance, Catharine looked up, such a world of love in her eyes that I was instantly stricken dumb. In that swift glance she betrayed her secret to us both. Even loyalty scarce enabled me to hide my love, but for her sake I concealed it 'neath a calm exterior,

so that Peter remained unaware of my supreme sacrifice.

With roguish effrontery the Tsar greeted me as an acquaintance of lofty rank from whom he begged the post of Pilot of the Neva.

Thereafter Peter came oft to my manor, the while on the neighbouring isles he began the construction of St. Petersburg, his "window to Europe." At the same time, he built with his own hands a *Khata*¹ upon the river-bank wherein, after a secret wedding, the unsuspecting girl dwelt happily as the wife of the pilot.

Placing upon her finger a wondrous green-gemmed ring, he whispered: "'Tis the Jewel of the Sea, which of all the world I love most—saving thyself."

V

THE SPAWN OF SATAN

The two lovers lived in unremitting felicity until, like a serpent to a dove-cote, there descended upon them that spawn of Satan, Ivan Stephanovitch Mazeppa. Scant liking had I for the Hetman and still less trust, thus was I ill content when Peter made him boon companion.

One evening as we lingered over our vodka Peter

¹ *Khata*, cottage. Peter's cottage enshrined in a brick building, in a garden just outside the Fortress, is still shown to visitors. One room serves as a chapel and contains a famous *icon* before which the faithful light tapers and reverently perform their devotions.

demanding: "Tell me, Pan¹ Ivan, the tale of the talismanic stone Nureddin gave me on surrender of the Black Sea!"

Mazeppa smiled, "Twice, Sire," he made answer, "have I won and lost the Sea-Stone. 'Twere tedious to tell by what adventure I met the daughter of a Tatar Khan. Suffice it to say that she became enamoured of my fatal fascinations, and after I had vowed to wed her, gave me the jewel.

"I had neither opportunity nor desire to keep my promise, being for the nonce entangled in an affair of gallantry, of which your Majesty has doubtless heard."

"You allude to that notorious ride?" smiled Peter contemptuously.

Unheeding the taunt the Hetman resumed: "I loved the lady right manfully, and was a frequent visitor at the castle. One night, as I mounted my charger to ride to the tryst, a Tatar lad sprang from the gloom and gave me a missive.

"'Twas from the Khan's daughter, who had followed me to Poland, demanding that I fulfil my promise.

"Infuriated by the wench's presumption I tore the missive to fragments and gave the matter no further thought.

"On my return from the castle I discovered the knave of a Tatar searching my chamber. Trembling with fear of the knout he made full confession. But such piteous

¹ Pan, Polish title for nobility.

appeal flashed in his eyes that I relented and suffered him to flee. Little I recked that the lad was Kupava, the Tatar Princess, who had dogged my footsteps those many versts and, spurned in love, thus sought to avenge herself.

“Fearing she would not desist in her efforts to purloin the Jewel, I bethought me of a place of concealment which none might suspect.

“Years syne in a fray with the Tatars, an arrow had grazed my side, leaving a fissure ’neath the skin into which I thrust the Sea-Stone. But not thus might I foil the Khan’s daughter of her vengeance, for one night, leading the Count to our rendezvous, they surprised us *in flagrante delicto*. Whereupon the scoundrel stripped and lashed me mercilessly, the while my Tatar sweetmeat rated me roundly as she searched my raiment. But her smile of triumph turned to a scowl of impotent chagrin when she failed to find the Sea-Stone.

“Forthwith they set me, naked as I was born, upon the back of an untamed stallion. Binding my heels beneath his belly they lashed him with the knout, then freed the frenzied steed to gallop o’er the steppe.

“We outran the wind and overtook a pack of wolves that coursed beside us snapping their murderous fangs within an ace of my defenceless person.

“But my fleet charger gradually outdistanced the pack and plunging into a river swam across, leaving the discomfited wolves howling dismally on the farther bank.

"In the grassy plain we came upon a herd of wild horses. Affrighted by our unwonted aspect they galloped into the forest, whither my maddened steed followed in swift pursuit and crashing against an oak fell lifeless to the ground.

"How long I lay I know not save that when I woke to consciousness a Cossack maiden gently bathed my wounds. It was the Khan's daughter, who had followed on her Arab courser, and the while I mused in wonderment at her deathless devotion, as her hands caressed my body of a sudden she discovered the hidden jewel. Instantly the delicate fingers were transformed into claws that clutched the Sea-Stone from my breast, and, ere I could grasp her sinuous form, she sped into a thicket and was lost to view.

"The rest thou knowest, how I became enamoured of the roving vagabond life, joined the Cossack horde and mounted swiftly in their esteem till they elected me Ataman of the Ukraine, an honour which you, Sire, so courteously confirmed.

"Such, Sire, is the story of the Sea-Stone. Guard well the talisman lest the Sultan wrest it from thee!"

"True," mused Peter, "the Turk carried it always in the hilt of his scimitar, but the hand that now possesseth the jewel hath mastery o'er my very life."

At that moment Catharine entered and replenished our glasses.

Of a sudden Mazeppa dropped the cup as he beheld a



"A pack of wolves coursed beside with murderous fangs."

From the painting by Horace Vernet, permission Maison Ad. Braun & Cie, Paris

dimpled finger on which shimmered the fateful Sea-Stone!

He raised his eyes and rested spellbound by her beauty.

Peter confided to the Hetman his project of building a fleet to gain mastery of the seas.

Mazeppa listened with feigned interest and quaffed a flattering toast to the "Little Father."

"A fig for the Tsar," scoffed Catharine, "an hundred Batioushkas¹ are not worth my honest pilot."

"Why holdest thou the Tsar in such contempt?" Peter demanded, clasping Catharine close. "Verily he doth hold thee in high esteem."

"Enough of jesting," she chided, then turning to the Hetman she pleaded, "Pan Mazeppa, of thy courtesy grant me a boon! Thou hast favour at Court, pray obtain my husband a place in the shipyards!"

Whereupon they both gave forth such peals of laughter that Catharine in high dudgeon would fain have quitted the room, save that Peter, barring the road, kissed away her tears.

"'Tis idle, Katinka, I have the post."

Clapping her hands—"Take me with thee!" she cried with delight.

"Anon, mayhap," Peter temporized. "I will hoard my wages till I may afford to send for thee. Bring vodka, Matioushka, we will carouse the night in honour of my appointment!"

¹ Batioushka: Little Father, popular appellative of the Tsar.

Already he swayed tipsily and I trembled lest another draught might be his undoing. But I had reckoned without the resourceful Catharine. Springing to the table she suddenly made off with the flagon. "Thou hast drunk thy fill, Batioushka. 'Tis time to bid good-night."

"Verily, Little Mother," he stammered, "thou art sweeter than vodka," and he followed meekly after like a chastened child.

VI

EAVESDROPPING

While strolling in the lilac garden next morning I was surprised by voices raised in altercation.

"Scoundrel, thus to whisper love to an honest wife!" protested the woman.

"Thine is no true marriage," sneered the man. "Little thou knowest his infidelity. For the past year he has been wedded to the daughter of a boyar!"

"Thou liest!" cried the woman, dealing a resounding smack upon the cheek of the unwelcome suitor.

"Little thou carest for that boor Peter!" retorted the other. "'Tis Menshikoff of whom thou art enamoured, else why didst thou dwell in his household?"

Creeping closer I peered through the hedge.

Clasping Catharine in fierce embrace Mazeppa muttered: "That dolt will never wed thee, but by the Gods I shall!"

Leaping the hedge I gripped him by the throat and shook him like the cur that he was.

“Defend thyself!” I cried, whipping out my rapier.

His blade crossed mine in an instant. He was a master of fence as they misunderstood it in Poland, mere court gymnastics, a trick of steps and postures, whilst in France I had learned a more manful form of attack. In three passes I had my opponent on the defence. In the fourth I could have pierced his guard and found his heart, but not being bent on murder, I played with my rival, pressing him ever to more violent effort with an unrelenting series of lightning parries and thrusts. Now I slit his velvet sleeve from shoulder to elbow leaving a scarlet gash on the bare white arm; now I pointed a new dimple on his paling cheek, and, as his head fell back, scorning the exposed throat, I struck his rapier suddenly from his hand.

While I stood smiling at Catharine, deeming the battle won, of a sudden Mazeppa sprang at me with a poniard. I felt it bite my side but he lacked the strength to send it home.

Clutching his throat I forced the miscreant to his knees, tightening my relentless fingers till his face turned livid. I was minded to slay him for that dastard stroke, but bethought myself. How could I account to his Cossacks? Believing him slain at the bidding of the Tsar, they would avenge the death of their Hetman. Moreover, Peter must never know of this little affair, for

at all hazards the honour of Catharine must remain unsmirched.

Wherefore I relaxed my grip and possessing myself of his pistols, marched my captive to the postern gate, set him on his steed, and bade him a long adieu.

Then, ere I was ware, soft arms were clasped about my neck and loving kisses caressed my cheeks. "God be thanked," murmured Catharine, "who sent thee to mine aid Alexasha!"

"More than life I love thee," I whispered, holding her close.

She shrank back shuddering and sank her face in her hands.

"Forgive me that I thus did fright thee," I pleaded, "albeit so free from guile is my love, that thus would I worship thee even in Heaven!"

Catharine smiled wistfully and stroking my brow, kissed me upon the eyelids.

VII

SIMPLE JOYS

When azure shadows o'er the pastures sweep
And sunset gilds the sheaves of gleaming grain,
The woodland wide and endless wind-swept plain,
When silver mists enfold the emerald deep;
When mid the reeds, the swan lies down to sleep
And tinkling streams entune their slumbrous strain,
Then to my straw-thatched hut for respite fain
Homeward with lagging limbs I lamely creep.

Then swift with starry eyes and laughter light,
Her tresses dark entwined with poppies red,
A Goddess floats upon the wings of Night.
A sapphire veil upon mine eyes she spreads,
Bends down upon my breast her radiant head
And on my lips the kiss of dreamland sheds!

MAIKOW.

Life in the simple pilot's cottage was so unalloyed that the Tsar feared to risk exchanging its simple bliss for the pomp and intrigue of Court. So great refreshment it afforded him to throw off the trappings and burdens of royalty that he knew not how he could ever endure them again.

All that winter he busied himself building his mighty city at the mouth of the Neva, dwelling happily in the Khata, the while slowly but majestically the great design took shape.

"Take Catharine into thy confidence; why longer conceal thine identity," I counselled, "'tis time to end this farce."

"My Alexasha, the wish to know that she loves me for myself prompts my action. Nobly, indeed, doth she stand the test, nathless thou speakest well and she shall have her reward. When my palace is finished I promise myself the delight of viewing her astonishment as she perceives that all this magnificence is for her alone!"

Alas, for many a day this happiness was not to be, for

of a sudden our ancient enemy, Charles of Sweden, invaded the Ukraine and the Tsar was called to the front.

Catharine remained at my manor of Oranienbaum in the companionship of my sister, Anna, who had become enamoured of Mazeppa, for the Prince was still a fine figure of a man, albeit the snows of premature winter had silvered his raven hair.

Anna wrote the Tsar that she had seen the Hetman and Catharine in St. Petersburg, and insisted that they were renewing a former intrigue.

This to me seemed but a jealous fancy for well I knew Mazeppa had returned to the Ukraine, where, though protesting his loyalty to Peter, he was secretly intriguing with Charles of Sweden, and that he had even invited him to Russia, promising to rally to his aid the Cossacks. That Mazeppa was capable of any infamy I knew full well, but neither the Tsar nor I would credit a slur against Catharine's fidelity.

"Natheless," Peter mused, "it may be that others have better wooed her than myself."

Thereupon taking from the Imperial Treasury the jewels of the Tsarina, he despatched me with the following missive:

"The Tsar of Holy Russia doth present these jewels to the worshipful Catharine, bidding her presence at the Kremlin in celebration of his late victories."

Catharine burst into a tempest of rage: "How darest thou make such shameful proposal?" she de-

manded, tearing the letter to fragments, and scattering the jewels upon the floor she quitted the chamber.

Hoping to find her in gentler mood the morrow, I busied myself with affairs of state, but on returning to the manor my sister greeted me with troublous tidings.

Catharine had fled no one knew whither. That night a shrouded figure had been seen prowling in the shadows. The broken trellis told that someone had climbed to her window. The casement had been forced and a letter thrown into the chamber.

Protesting undying passion the Hetman had implored Catharine to abandon her boorish husband and elope with him to the Ukraine.

The indignant wife had torn the letter in fragments, but piecing them carefully together I read:

The Suppliant

A haggard beggar cried for alms
Hard by the Minster gate.
His face was worn with furrows deep,
The ruthless lines of fate.

Pale, thin and blind, he humbly craved
A crust of bread alone.
A churlish jester placed within
His outstretched hand a stone!

Thus I, a suppliant at your gate,
Crave but a crust, the while
You starve my passion-famished heart
With but a stony smile!

FOFANOV.

My heart was heavy with apprehension when my sister returned me the casket of jewels with this missive:

To the Tsar of All the Russias.

Exalted Sovereign:

Know that true love cannot be bought by jewels, nor shall I deign to share the celebration of thy victories, for on the morrow I go to the one whom alone I have ever loved!

CATHARINE.

VIII

THE CUP OF LIFE

More bitter than the lees of new-pressed wine
The vain remembrance of long dead delight.
But even as wine ripens with time's flight
So glows my spirit with the day's decline.
Though looms the morrow fearsome and malign,
A sunless waste of dread adversity,
Yet not for restful death I craven cry,
But fain would live and drink Life's cup divine.

This is my prayer: To suffer, to create
And know the ecstasy of blind desires.
Through lowering clouds of unrelenting fate
To hear the voices of etherial lyres;
Till from Love's golden cup is drunk the wine,
Then welcome Death—Life's wondrous draught was mine!

PUSHKIN.

The wrath of the Emperor was terrible to see. Fortunate, indeed, was Catharine not to be present during that first mad outburst.

Peter had lavished upon her implicit confidence and the faithless wife had betrayed the trust. Only the vortex of war into which he was now whirled saved him from utter madness.

Everywhere we sought the double traitor but ever in that interminable struggle he was successful in eluding us.

The Tsar's armies fought in the East, the while, conquering as I went, I descended the Dnieper. Meeting before Poltava we routed the combined forces of Mazeppa and the Swedish monarch and the war was won.

Drawn by an overmastering longing, Peter returned to the Khata on the Neva where he had passed so many happy hours. To his amazement, he discovered proof of Catharine's recent presence. Opening the wardrobe he discovered the gown she had worn on the eve of her flight.

As he buried his face in its folds a light step sounded on the threshold and with a glad cry Catharine glided into his outstretched arms!

Peter now comprehended that she had repulsed him in the guise of Tsar only to be faithful to her shipwright lover. Bitterly did he now reproach himself that he had ever suspected her capable of disloyalty.

"Let us renew our former life!" she smiled exultantly.

"No, Katinka, we shall begin a new life together. Hardship and peril shall we endure for the sake of our beleaguered country, but you will not fail me!"

At that instant the clatter of galloping hoofs echoed on the driveway.

"My troopers!" he cried, throwing open the door. "Comrades in arms," he commanded, "salute my bride!"

An hundred blades flashed in air, an hundred lusty throats roared long huzzas.

Comprehending that Peter was the Tsar, Catharine paled suddenly and would have fallen had he not swung her to the saddle, mounted, and, followed by his lancers, rode triumphantly away.

IX

THE RANSOM OF AN EMPEROR

Thenceforth the reunited lovers became inseparable. Catharine accompanied the Tsar on his campaign, sharing his every hardship, heartening him from fits of depression to fresh endeavour.

In the supreme crisis of the war when Peter abandoned all for lost, she extricated him from disaster.

Drunk with his victory of Poltava, in which Charles of Sweden and the traitor Mazeppa were utterly defeated, the Emperor embarked upon a reckless campaign against the Turks and Tatars, wherein our soldiers slew thousands of Janissaries. We bivouacked at sundown upon the east bank of the Pruth. A less auspicious spot we could not well have chosen. We were completely trapped, without supplies, the Tatars harrying us in the

rear while an army of two hundred thousand Turks commanded by Muhammid had crossed the river and attacked us in front.

Battling from behind earthworks heaped with the bodies of our slain comrades we sold our lives as dearly as possible. It was the blackest moment of the Emperor's life. For himself alone he would willingly have faced death, but he could not brook the thought of surrendering Catharine to the nameless horrors of Turkish captivity.

Under the unendurable strain at the moment when he was most needed his reason gave way and he fell into unconsciousness. But with Catharine's tender ministrations the seizure finally passed.

Peter pressed my hand feebly. "The Turks may parley," he whispered. "Accede to all their demands. Tell them I will surrender the empire in exchange for our freedom. Catharine has full power to act for me. I am at death's door and can no longer speak."

I never beheld Catharine more entrancingly attired than that evening in the gold-braided uniform of a captain of the guards.

"We will save him," she cried. "Take this casket, Alexasha! Therein is shrined the ransom of an Emperor!"

Never shall I forget that memorable ride through the scented night.

Mounting Catharine upon a mettlesome Arab I galloped beside her, bearing a flag of truce, to the pavilion pitched midway between the two conflicting hosts.

The Grand Vizier Baltaji Muhammad salaamed till his beard swept the carpet, then bade his interpreter welcome us with glowing words.

Beneath the snowy folds of his turban, I recognized with a start the sinister frown of Mazeppa.

If the Tsarina also knew him she vouchsafed no sign of recognition but calmly unfolded the treaty which the pretended interpreter translated into the Turkish tongue.

Well knowing that we lay completely in his power the Grand Vizier was loth to haggle over terms; but Mazeppa signed to us secretly behind the Moslem's back when to yield and when to stand firm.

"Bribe lavishly," he whispered in Russian, "if thou wouldst not condemn thyself to slavery in the harem of the Turk."

Catharine threw him a swift glance of gratitude.

Opening the casket I invited the Vizier to examine the glittering gems.

"'Tis the ransom of an Emperor," he smiled, fondling the jewels with clawlike fingers, "but 'tis for the Sultan, alas not for me! What shall I gain if I sign this treaty?"

"And my reward?" questioned Mazeppa, "should I preserve thy lord's life and empire?"

The Tsarina abased her eyes, a scarlet tide flaming her cheeks, then whispered in the Hetman's ear.

Muhammid eyed them suspiciously.

"These jewels are a gift of gratitude from the Tsarina to thee," explained Mazeppa. "The Sultan shall be never the wiser."

The Vizier shook his head regretfully. "What pretext may I plead for letting the enemies of Islam slip like these stones through my fingers?"

"This," cried Mazeppa, taking from Catharine's hand the Sea-Stone. "Dost thou not recognize the Talisman?"

Muhammid recoiled suddenly.

"The Tsar doth forever render thee back both sea and stone. Is it not enough, great Vizier?" pleaded Catharine.

"By Allah, yes," assented Muhammid, thrusting the coffre within his robe. "Give me the treaty to sign."

The interpreter silently brought forth inkhorn and quill.

"Write also," commanded Catharine, "that the Hetman shall be granted free passage to his country!"

"With his chosen lady," leered Mazeppa, "let that too be written! Though the Sultan possess the Sea-Stone a more precious jewel shall be mine!"

As my blade leaped its sheath, Catharine placed a restraining hand upon mine.

"Have a care!" she warned, and with all ceremony, we took our leave and mounting our coursers rode away.

Night had fallen. A vague foreboding oppressed me as we descended the dark defile leading to our lines. Beyond the ravine waited the Tsar's body-guard, but a thick forest hid us from their view. As we rounded a turn, only a verst from safety in the Russian camp, of a sudden from out the shadows galloped a band of Tatars.

In vain I lashed and spurred our foam-flecked chargers, hoping to outdistance our pursuers. With every stride their fresh steeds swiftly gained upon us. Ere I was aware a burly miscreant charged upon me with lance and sabre, the while one of his dusky comrades rapt Catharine from the saddle and galloped into the gloom. Wheeling, I dashed in pursuit of the fugitive, and after a breakneck chase through brush and bracken, ran my quarry down.

Fearing to wound the Empress, I let fly my pistol in the flank of the Tatar's steed. With a snort, it sank like stone. With an agile bound, the rider leaped clear, but Catharine, taken unawares, was pinned beneath the fallen charger.

As I dismounted and strove to release her from durance, the Tatar suddenly sprang upon me from behind. Gripping him in a wrestling hold, I bent his neck slowly backward as he writhed and twisted striving to unlock my grip.

The while we strove thus in deadly grapple by ill chance, losing my footing, I slipped and fell. But ere my antagonist had profited by my misfortune, I rolled over and was again uppermost. Little by little I felt his strength ebb till he relaxed with a moan and lay as lifeless beneath my ruthless grip.

Thereupon, bringing a bridle Catharine aided me to truss the rogue securely and bind him to my stirrup. Not till that moment, by reason of the henna with which he had bronzed his features, did I recognize Mazeppa.

"S'death!" he muttered, "but thou hast an evil twist of the arm!"

Naught made I answer, being concerned that the Tsarina should be safely mounted. Then as I sprang to the saddle the Hetman clung fawning to Catharine's stirrup, covering her feet with kisses.

"How can I thank thee, gracious Empress," he faltered, "for thy merciful promise."

Bewildered how I might keep that vow yet mete full justice upon the scoundrel, anxiously and vainly I pondered the while we rode to camp.

With his wonted resourcefulness Peter solved the problem, reconciling apparent magnanimity with relentless revenge.

Summoning my Cossacks he commanded: "Let the prisoner return to his country. Bind him naked to a stallion of the steppe! Let him ride back as he came!"

Long and loud laughed those ruthless Zaporogians at the grim humour of the plan. Eagerly wrote they a passport bidding the Sultan speed the fugitive on his way. Thus did unrelenting fate repeat the ignominious ride of the traitor, but whether he won free to Poland or perished upon the steppe knoweth no man.

When the Tsarina presented the treaty the Tsar's delight knew no bounds.

"But Batyoushka, I have lost the Sea-Stone!" sighed Catharine regretfully.

"Little matter, Katinka," laughed Peter, "thou art the brightest jewel in my crown!"

AFTERMATH

What more remaineth to tell, since all the world doth know how that the Tsar did honour the former serf with wedding and coronation more resplendent than Tsarina e'er had known?

Nor need I relate how, while freeing the oppressed people of Armenia, the Tsar regained the long-lost Sea-Stone with mastery of the Caspian Sea.

Peter was planning an expedition in quest of the Nameless Eastern Sea when he suddenly resolved to visit the Khata on the Neva where the pilot and his peasant bride had long syne lived in simple, childlike joy.

A tempest lashed the broad and turbid waters into

a welter of snow-flecked foam. Far down the channel near Cronstadt signal fires could be discerned flashing faintly against the leaden sky.

Crowded to the rail with soldiers a ship had gone upon the rocks and was being hammered to fragments by the heavy surf.

Knotting a life-line round his waist Peter plunged into the breakers. Through the hissing surges he swam toward the sinking craft. Now submerged by a mighty billow, anon mounting manfully onward over the moiling waters, at last he gained the long sought goal and aided the seamen in fixing the rope. Then back through the seething sea he swam bearing a drowning soldier.

After hours of exertion, breathless and spent, his comrades succeeded in hauling the boat from the rocks, thus saving the lives of a score of men. All night Peter toiled in freezing surf. At dawn he was stricken with palsy and delirium.

It seemed to his disordered vision that he beheld the emerald eyes of the Sea King glaring through the foam, clutching with finny paws and striving to drag him downward. And ever as he struck out undismayed, the voice of the monster echoed in his ears:

"Thy life is forfeit. By dint of the jewel hast thou gained Empire over the seas. Wherefore, for ever must thou dwell beneath them!"

“Too soon, too soon,” moaned Peter, clutching the Sea-Stone to his breast. “When that I gain the Nameless Sea then mayst thou take my life!”

On his death-bed he sent for Vitus Bering, the Danish discoverer, bidding him equip an expedition to the Nameless Eastern Sea.

“An thou dost find the ocean call it by thy name!” he commanded, placing the jewel in his hands. “Then may the Sea King claim his Talisman.”

Thus speaking, he who had ne’er rested in life at last for ever found rest.

Gracious Sovereign Lady, to whom I inscribe this paltry chronicle, pray forgive me if betwixt the lines is discernible the love I vainly strove to extinguish; nor blush to learn that within my heart the deathless flame anew doth ever glow.

The Undying Flame

Extinguished seems the flame of life’s glad pyre,
No more love’s fiery ardours sear my heart.
The very world is dead, save where thou art,
And all is ashes white of vain desire.
If I no more with youth’s impassioned lyre
Beset thy loving ear with strains of woe
’Tis not that all my blood hath turned to snow,
But still within my breast burns love’s white fire.

As in its foaming course the mountain stream,
That hurls from off its moss-grown altars steep,

The Quest of the Circling Seas 203

Seeking the fertile vale with mad delight
Restrains therein its swift, tempestuous flight,
Pauses in placid pools to sleep and dream
And flows with tranquil current clear and deep.

TOLSTOI.

CHAPTER VII

THE FAUN OF ORANIENBAUM

I

I wandered through the bosky bloom,
The twilight waned, the lindens swayed
Their leafless boughs, the shadows played
Like goblins in the dusky gloom;
When sudden, mid the pleachéd shade
I stumbled on an image old,
A marble faun, with moss encrust
And dim with centuries of dust.

He leered from out the leafy lace
With wanton eyes and cynic face;
The while in admiration bent
I lingered there in merriment.

“Old Faun!” I mused, “thy features mute
And cynic smile men held divine!
To gladsome strains of pipe and flute
They poured the good Falernian wine
And wreathed thy brow with myrtle fair
And at thine altar breathed a prayer!

“Tell me! Old phantom pale with care,
Dost thou thy vanished glories sigh
And mourn the days of long-gone by,



**"Vague whispered vows of love you heard
From trembling lovers close embraced."**

Watteau

Permission W. A. Mansell & Co., London

When all the world was blithe and fair
And love and laughter everywhere?

“Or was man’s joy an idle tale
And ruthless toil his only lot?
Tell me, I pray, O phantom pale,
If this is true or is it not?”

But while I questioned thus, the while
He only leered with cynic smile.

“Or yet, when flowered a riper day,
Thou didst behold its bloom of gold
And, rapt from out the ruins old,
Wert throned within this garden gay,
With nymphs and tritons here to play.
Anew it rang with laughter light
And liquid strains of music bright,
Within the garden’s sheltering shade
Wandered alone a man and maid.

“Vague whispered vows of love you heard
From trembling lovers close embraced.
Tell me how long they kept their word
And stolen kisses undisgraced?
Were their fond vows and plighted name
Soon by the winter rains effaced?
Tell me, old phantom pale, I pray!

“Or haply here again they came
Beneath the sheltering lindens’ shade,
With newer loves again to stray,
And other trystings slyly made!
Again thy mocking cynic smile
Their vain pretences tore away—
Did their flushed faces then betray
Their fickle hearts’ transparent guile?
Tell me, old phantom pale, I pray!”

Thus questioned I the faun, the while
He only leered a lewd, sardonic smile.

MAIKOW.

Of all the statues in the pleachéd *allées* Varya Alexandrevna Damentieff, Maid of Honour to her Imperial Majesty, Catharine the Great,¹ loved best the Faun.

To her there was nothing malevolent in his cynical expression. Kind and fatherly it seemed, as though, recalling erstwhile youthful follies, he smiled in sympathetic comprehension. Wherefore Varya oft whispered secrets in his pointed ear, well knowing she could trust the silent wood-god never to divulge them.

Rising on tiptoe she clasped his mossy shoulders:

"Dear old Faun," she pleaded, "till my father cometh back from the Nameless Sea take me I pray for one of thy children!"

It seemed to Varya that the marble-hearted cynic smiled assent, and patting his furrowed brow she prattled merrily on to her silent auditor.

A rustling rose from the thicket, the boughs parted, and a youth stepped into the pathway, then shrank back abashed.

Varya started, for this stranger might well have been offspring of the ancient wood-god, so like he was to the marble image. Clad in a sable tunic, girt with a baldric of shark's teeth, his bronzed wrists bore golden

¹ Catharine II., 1729-1796.



"Clasping his mossy shoulders, Varya whispered her secret in his pointed ear."

Permission Violet Mesereau and Editor *Film Fun*

armlets and upon his forehead quivered a white eagle-plume.

"Me Sitka, Indian brave," he faltered. "Come from far away land, Alaska, bring letter to Great-Chief-Tsar from friend White-Medicine."

"Thou art the Tsar's forester and boon companion?" questioned the maid.

The savage bowed assent.

"Tell me, didst ever meet the voyager Vitus Bering? Long syne when I was but a babe, my father sailed with him to the far-flung Nameless Sea, since when hath no one tidings of them. Perchance they both have perished on that lone uncharted isle."

The youth frowned in a futile effort to remember, then shook his head. "Me know no Russian man only White-Medicine."

"Tell me of life in that wondrous country!" Varya besought, seating herself upon a marble bench.

Sitka stretched himself at her feet discoursing eloquently of the Land of Endless Day luring its children ever onward. He told of hunting wolves in the fir-clad mountains, of spearing seal from his fragile kyak in glacier-caverned fiords, and trips by dog-sled on the frozen rivers.

"Not like fool Russian dogs," he vaunted, "my Malamutes have hearts and souls. Long, long-gone time our ancestors beasts, now totem carved on tree. Sitka belong Bear family. Father he Fox, Grand-

father, Beaver, Great-Grandfather Eagle, and Far-Great-Grandfather Shark. Sitka not slay these beast peoples, cause he their child."

The Indian then told of his mother, wise beyond the wisdom of men, maker of wondrous blankets, wherein she wove the past and the future, for well she knew the secret lore of mountain, tempest, and sea. He told of the dread beauty of the crashing bergs, blue as sapphire, green as ocean, or rainbow-tinted with scarves of mist veiling their lofty brows.

"White-Medicine love my country. He say, 'Go, Sitka, tell my people'— But Great Russian Tsar-Chief not care. He only care hunt, and drink vodka all long night!"

"Tell thy tale to the Empress," counselled Varya, "she will listen!"

As he told of the lone Russian scientist who came to dwell in his village, a sudden premonition seized the maiden. What if White-Medicine should prove to be her long-lost father!

II

THE FAVOURITE OF AN EMPRESS

Breathings soft and murmurs tender,
Nightingales' sad trill,
Gleaming moonlight's mellow splendour
O'er the mist-wreathed hill;
Silver light and shadow golden,
Liquid glooms of night,

Fingers frail and limbs enfolden
In love's brief delight;
Languorous sighs and burning kisses,
Gleaming clouds of snow,
Gladsome tears and bitter blisses
And the dawn's red glow!

SHENSHIN.

Waiting without the Emperor's door while his master held high revel, the Indian's quick ear caught a stealthy footstep. Shrinking within an embrasure he saw a courtier tiptoe silently to the apartment of the Tsarina. A ray of light told that the door had been left ajar, and marching to and fro in the corridor, Sitka resumed his vigil.

Moments dragged into hours. The great bell of St. Sergius tolled thrice. Peals of maudlin laughter resounded from the apartment of the Tsar, and from that of the Tsarina came a murmur of amorous voices.

Against the moonlit casement two shadowy figures quivered in close embrace.

"Farewell, my Love, my Life! But, alas, not mine alone," murmured the man regretfully.

The woman clung more closely. "What boots my marriage with that brute Holsteiner? Dost thou not love me, Orlof?" she questioned petulantly.

"Oh, that I might free thee from this unseemly alliance and proclaim thee Catharine mine before the world!" he voiced his longing.

"Peter would never set me free," she protested.

"Albeit, once at liberty, I might as Empress make thee Tsar."

"Then shall I accomplish what the Tsar might not," he vaunted. "I myself will set thee free."

Catharine laughed, incredulous, provocative, insulting. "Coward," she cried, "thou wouldst not dare!"

Orlof loosed an oath. "Thou lovest me not," he muttered, "thus to doubt my valiance!"

"Love, I will lavish on thee every preferment in the Tsarina's power!"

The favourite smiled complacently. "Who holdeth the army," he explained, "holdeth the Tsardom, wherefore must I have gold in plenty wherewith to purchase."

"How may I thus dispense such sums without arousing Peter's suspicions?"

The courtier's eyelids narrowed. "There is a way," he smiled. "A wife could bring me a handsome dowry."

The Empress drew a quick breath. "Hath ever favourite sought like boon?" she burst forth. "Yet mayhap," she mused, "is my love thus magnanimous. The morrow shalt thou betroth the Princess Varya Alexandrevna!"

Sitka grimly clenched his hunting-knife.

"Gossoudarinia,¹ she shall be my wife but in name!" asseverated Orlof. "I shall spend her fortune, Sovereign Lady, but to gain Empire for thee!"

¹ Gossoudarinia, "Sovereign Lady," Orlof's habitual term of address for Catharine.

From the lips of Catharine came a sigh of supreme content.

III

THE SANDS OF DOOM

"*Au secours!* I drown! In pity save me!" shrieked a girl waist-deep in the treacherous mire.

Leaping from the skiff, a man swam swiftly to her succour. It had fallen to Count Orlof to guide Varya through the Oranienbaum marshes. Well content was he, for in his brutal fashion the Imperial Guardsman loved the fair Maid of Honour.

"Thou art more than life, Galoubchik,"¹ he had told her. "My attentions to the Tsarina are but mere pretence, a pretext for concealing my true passion. Wherefore deny me not, Varyushka, for by all that lives, I swear I shall have my will!"

He clutched Varya fiercely. His hot breath fanned her cheeks. She strove to throw him off; he only clutched her closer in his inexorable arms. Feigning submission she relaxed for a moment, then of a sudden sank her teeth in the Guardsman's wrist.

With a moan of agony the Count cast her from the skiff. Groping blindly for footing Varya was gripped by the ruthless mire. In vain she strove to free herself from its cruel clutch, the quaking slime drew her ever downward.

¹ Galoubchik, "Little Pigeon."

In vain did Orlof search for foothold, the quicksand swiftly sucked them under. In vain he shouted for succour. What chance was there any might hear in these lonely marshes?

"Grasp this thwart!" he cried, "I will return and bring thee aid!" and righting the skiff, clambered in, and oared swiftly away.

Vainly Varya strove to raise herself upon the thwart, the slime gripped her ever more firmly. Whelmed by despair she gave forth a last trembling cry.

Across the lonely marshes resounded a distant echo. Minutes lagged like hours to her smouldering senses, when of a sudden through the gloom flashed a light. The rushes parted and Sitka paddled swiftly to her side.

She clutched the gunwale but had not strength to raise herself. Then the Indian grasped her in his powerful arms.

In vain the marsh had fought for its victim. Lover ne'er clasped sweetheart in more firm embrace. Slowly the sands yielded up their prize and Sitka drew her back to life and safety!

IV

THE BARRIER

Upon a midsummer evening, in the silent, shadowy forest strolled two lovers. Above whispered slender aspens. The pendulous branches of the birches

scarce stirred. Gnarled oaks bent protectingly over them. Along the path, pleached with checkered shadows, golden dragon-flies floated in the drowsy dusk, then of a sudden darted away. Thrushes trilled in the thickets, as if prattling of innocent, childlike joy. Over all hovered the scent of roses. The whole wide world seemed a-dream, rife with unutterable peace.

Varya bent beneath the mossy image of the Faun.

"Me be happy never unless you come back Alaska live with me," faltered Sitka, timidly clasping her hand.

Varya trembled, not for fear of him, but at the turmoil in her heart. She was sorely tempted to trust this forest lover, quit the sordid world of Court, and flee to the far-flung country. But a vague apprehension sealed her lips.

At thought of his unworthiness, the Indian flushed with humility. What could he seem in her eyes? But a brute savage! He sighed bitterly.

"Not possible White Princess live with humble Indian," he smiled wistfully. "Like take pheasant from nest make wife of great bear in cave. We all same bear and pheasant, Great Spirit make us for inhabit different world. Yet wonder-miracle Love make all difference same!"

Varya smiled.

The Indian stroked her hair tenderly.

"Me love you more than world," he murmured.

“Dear Princess Pheasant, come with big brown Bear!”

Yielding to his embrace Varya sensed the divine miracle, Love had swept away the barrier!

A sudden rustle in the shrubbery, the boughs parted and Orlof eyed them scornfully.

“Pray forgive my untimely intrusion!” he smiled with irony.

Sitka clenched his hunting knife. Varya trembling abased her eyes.

“Kindred spirits!” scoffed Orlof. “Verily such ye are, yet not, as ye might desire. Kinship indeed ye may claim, albeit not that of man and wife! For of this I hold proof—one man is father to you both—Dementief! Mongrel, thou art her brother!”

V

THE MASQUE OF FATE

Life is a merry masquerade
Wherein we mummers romp and play
With laughing lip and heart of lead,
Plaintive Pierrot and Harlequin gay,
Like flowers that blossom for a day—
Brief as the love of man and maid.
Life is a merry masquerade!

Monk, soldier, jester, yokel, maid,
Seigneur and serf and painted clown,
Proud emperors in bright brocade,
Sinner and saint and ragged jade
Brush elbows in the promenade



Catharine II

Empress of all the Russias

From a print by Caroline Watson, after a portrait by Rosselin, permission J. O. Wright

With Pompadour in panniered gown.
Life is a merry masquerade!

Proud emperors in bright brocade
Trailing in blood the cross, the crown,
Playing at war, like little boys
Ranging tin soldiers on parade—
Then tumbling them in anger down,
A shapeless wreck of broken toys.
Life is a merry masquerade!

Envoy

Prince, when the sum of all is said
And curtain falls upon the play,
Like fairest flowers that soonest fade,
Tell us our parts we bravely played,
Plaintive Pierrot and Harlequin gay,
In Life's mad merry masquerade.

It was Midsummer Night at Oranienbaum. The gardens were abloom with myriad lanterns gleaming like fairyland in flashing fountains and tranquil pools. All day long had the bosquets echoed with laughing voices and flying feet. The flower of Muscovite chivalry was gathered at a sumptuous banquet, and a masque enacted, wherein Catharine, in the rôle of the goddess Felitza, gave to each courtier the order of the crown and golden bell.

This signified that at the stroke of Matins on the morrow they should assemble at the Church of Our Lady of Kazan to witness her coronation. Beneath her mask of gaiety Catharine concealed a heavy heart.

Awaiting the accomplishment of Orlof's plot to establish her as Empress Regnant she trembled with apprehension. Could she repose confidence in the loyalty of her followers? Or might they not inform the Emperor and bring upon her ignominy and death?

Little joy had Varya in the night's festivities, for thought that Sitka would soon depart. But the Tsarina had commanded, wherefore robed in pompadour rose she had tripped the gavotte with smiling face but heavy heart.

When the dance was done in quest of her lover she sought the moon-silvered maze.

A step sounded on the path and a courtier strode from the shadows. As he drew nigh Varya recognized Orlof.

Mistaking the fair masker for his Imperial mistress, he sprang forward and clasped her passionately.

For an instant the earth reeled beneath her, then Varya recovered. Suspecting that this was more than a rendezvous and hoping to gain knowledge of a plot, she simulated acquiescence.

"All is in readiness," he whispered, "a troika waiteth without the gate. Haste, Sovereign Lady, to assume thy crown!"

Varya smiled consent.

"Have no fear," laughed Orlof; "the Tsar's henchmen may shout themselves hoarse, but Peter will not hear."

Catching her breath quickly, "Assassin!" she gasped.

"*Gossoudarinia*," he murmured, straining her to his breast, "for love of thee I dare death."

"Wait then my coming," cried Varya struggling free. "The Emperor must be warned without delay," she thought as she hastened from the maze.

A moment later came Catharine, and Orlof clumsily explained his well-nigh fatal mistake. After upbraiding her favourite for his recklessness, the Empress sealed her forgiveness in a long embrace, and entering the troika they galloped into the darkness.

That wild midsummer night's ride has long since become memorable. How first they rode to the Guardsman's barracks, where his comrades of the Ismailofski regiment swore allegiance is known to all. How the guard escorted them to the Church of our Lady of Kazan, wherein Catharine was crowned Empress of all the Russias and how from a balcony of the Winter Palace, she thanked her faithful followers, is set forth in every history.

Meanwhile in the gardens of Oranienbaum the fête had reached its height. At last the Tsar arrived and the company took partners for the minuet. At that instant the great bell of St. Sergius tolled midnight.

Forsaking the dance without so much as taking leave of their imperial host, the mad maskers incontinently fled.

"What does this mean?" questioned the Tsar wrathfully.

"Treason!" whispered Varya, then breathlessly she recounted the meeting with Orlof in the maze.

A group of loyal officers pressed round the wildered sovereign.

"Sire, the Empress holdeth the army body and soul," frowned the Field Marshal.

"Attack with the fleet!" commanded the Tsar.
"To Cronstadt with all speed!"

Embarking in the imperial barge they rowed across the sunrise-tinted water to the sombre fortress.

"Who goes there?" challenged a sentry.

"The Tsar!" Peter made answer.

"No longer is there Tsar!" was the scornful retort.

VI

THE CUP OF DEATH

Broken-hearted the Emperor abdicated and retired to his hunting-lodge at Ropcha, vainly hoping to save his life by the sacrifice of all else.

The road teemed with soldiery; to attempt to gain the hunting-lodge by this route would be futile. Only one course remained, the river. Throwing a cloak about her Varya sped to the bank. Unmooring a skiff she oared swiftly down-stream. On she rowed, verst after verst, beneath trembling birches through the silent

night. Her sleeves torn to tatters, her palms bleeding, spent and famished, at last she gained the hunting-lodge.

Sitka answered to her knock and, finger on lip, pointed at the bent figure huddled by the fire.

"Sire!" cried Varya, "this is no time for brooding. They are coming to kill you, flee while yet is time!"

The Tsar rose dazedly. "They?" he echoed mechanically.

"Orlof and his brothers. Under pretext of friendship they come to revel the night, but beware, Sire, they bring poisoned wine!"

Peter shook his head incredulously. "If he bringeth wine—Orlof is my friend—'tis the cup of forgetfulness," he muttered. "I ask only to forget."

Sitka's hand was upon his arm—"Quick, Sire, flee! I will saddle horses."

"Whither?" demanded the Tsar.

"'Cross great snow-country all way to Sitka's land. Sitka glad go where men not lie and kill."

The Tsar rose, a flash of his old spirit kindling in his eyes. "A disguise," he cried. "Look, there is gold in the coffre. We will fool them yet!"

A clatter of hoofs echoed on the drive.

"Alas, it is too late!" shuddered Varya.

"No, no," whispered the Indian, thrusting her through the rear casement, while Orlof accompanied by his brothers staggered into the chamber.

They greeted the Tsar hilariously. Taking plate from a hamper they set the table. Someone burst into a rollicking drinking song. Varya saw Orlof offer the Emperor a glass of wine.

Peter lifted it to his lips and inhaled the bouquet. "'Tis Burgundy," he smiled, "my favourite vintage!" and ere Sitka could snatch the glass, drained it at a draught.

Orlof eyed the Tsar eagerly. After a little his features contorted.

"'Tis poison!" he cried, gripping his rapier. "*À moi!* Sitka, I die!"

The Indian drew his knife and attacked Orlof.

In an instant the room was a maelstrom of flashing blades. Little could Varya distinguish in the mêlée save that sorely pressed the Tsar backed slowly toward the window. With a sudden sweep Sitka slashed the face of one, then with a turn of the wrist sent the rapier of another flying.

Another lunge and the huge bulk of Orlof fell to the floor dragging cloth and service. But this was only a feint. Pinioning the Indian beneath the knees he brought him down with a sudden fall. In vain Sitka strove to writhe free, he held him in a vise-like grip while his brothers binding the Indian's arms to his sides trussed him securely.

Gripping the Tsar by the throat Orlof choked the breath from his feeble chest. A moment later the

glazed eyes and frothing lips told that the end had come.¹

"Put the corpse to bed," he commanded, "make it appear a natural death!"

"Murder! Murder!" rang a woman's shriek.

The assassins started in sudden affright.

"Look, the casement!" cried Orlof pointing to Varya. "Spy!" he hissed, "thou shalt ride with me to my castle!"

So saying he flung a cloak about her, and swung her to the saddle, but dropped the bridle with a yell as the Indian's hunting-knife slashed his wrist.

While lying neglected in the shadows Sitka had gnawed the rope and stealthily stolen forth. Straight between the eyes he struck and Orlof sank like a felled ox.

Abandoning him for dead his brothers hurriedly mounted, and rode off in the night.

VII

THE LOOM OF FATE

Symbols of Fate I weave upon my loom,
Speeding my shuttle ere the growing gloom,
Twining the rainbow strands with fingers deft
Till in the robe is all life's meaning weft.
The fretted lightning in the starless skies,
The swastika of sunny destinies,

¹ Peter III was assassinated July 17, 1762.

The lowering clouds of bleak December days
And laughing crests of August's golden maize,
Red arrow-heads of war and tides of blood,
Vermilion flame, and livid, purple flood.
The silver stars that lamp the midnight gloom—
Symbols of Fate I weave upon my loom.
White mountain domes and glaciers emerald hued,
The sapphire seas' serene infinitude
And on the marge a vague, mysterious line,
The dim horizon through green boughs of pine.
Like a black feather from an eagle's flight,
Down from the ebon wings of brooding night,
There slowly falls a soft, caressing plume.
Symbols of Fate I weave upon my loom.

Bending over her loom, Kentu, the Indian crone, wove a wonder-blanket, wherein she depicted in glowing colours the fate of her son, Sitka. With patient toil she had twined therein the sombre threads of his past and she now strove with nimble fingers to forecast his sunny destiny. But her lonely heart was rife with apprehension. Would her son come back from across the far Sea-Water ere the Great Spirit should bear her to the Happy Hunting Ground?

The crone's reverie was broken by a sudden uproar. In raucous unison a pack of hungry Malamutes gave tongue.

Scanning the trail Kentu saw an Indian leading a pale-faced girl.

The crone gave no sign of greeting till the strangers halted before the totems flanking the door. Then, drawing the blanket, she bade them enter.

"Matyushka," faltered Sitka, "bid us welcome!"

Kentu coldly ignored the proffered hand.

"Dost bring me a daughter?" she questioned.

Sitka's glance fell before her searching eyes. "The daughter of White Medicine," he assented, then demanded brusquely:

"Where is he?"

The crone pointed to a cabin hard by, at whose door sat an aged white man.

"Come!" called Sitka eagerly.

At their approach the man recoiled as though beholding a spirit, then sprang eagerly forward. "My beloved wife!" he smiled, clasping Varya in his arms.

"Father!" she faltered, stroking his long, white hair.

"Sitka bring White Princess long, long way cross Snow Mountains and Great Sea-Water," the Indian explained breathlessly. "Now we ver, ver happy. Only tell White Princess who my father. Bad Russian say I her brother. You tell us that lie! Sitka not can live without White Princess."

Dementieff drew himself up to his full height. "Thou art son of the Tsarevitch!" he asserted, "grandson of the great Peter!"

Astonishment and incredulity mingled in Sitka's eyes. Varya gave a joyous cry.

"Condemned to death thy father fled with Bering across the Nameless Sea. Cast away upon these shores,

a lone exile he lived and died, leaving thee a babe in the arms of thy mother."

"Better," sighed Sitka bitterly, "were I a simple savage than an outcast half-breed!"

Bowed with humiliation he climbed the cliff to his father's grave. He laid bare the sepulchre and revealed a body wrapped in a sail. As he lifted the mouldering canvass a faded, satin bodice told that the golden haired wearer was a woman.

With breathless haste he returned to the lodge. Before her loom sat the crone muttering incoherently.

"Why you lie?" cried Sitka indignantly. "Not father there in grave. White woman!"

Kentu nodded assent. "Long time gone," she recounted, "come great Russian chief and white princess. Many moons pass—both die. Leave me Sitka, little paleface papoose."

"Then I am white!" he smiled exultantly.

"Look!" commanded the crone. "White mother's ring. Me never tell no one, fear you leave old Kentu. Not can bear lose Sitka."

"The Sea-Stone!" cried Varya tremblingly. "My Tsar!" she whispered. "Return and claim thy heritage!"

"Great Bear happy here with little Hen-Pheasant," Sitka laughed, clasping her in ursine embrace.

Tears of joy welled in Varya's eyes. "Here lieth our kingdom," she smiled in assent.

Albeit her trembling fingers scarce could hold the shuttle the crone wove on unceasingly.

"Look!" she cried, "wonder-blanket all done. See, two hearts barred by mountain!"

Varya peered over her shoulder. "But Kentu," she protested, "I see no barrier!"

"Obmanui, Vanishing Mountain," insisted the crone. "All vanished away."

Lifting it from the loom Sitka folded the blanket about Varya in wedding ceremonial.

"Never was there barrier," she smiled, nestling contentedly in his arms.

In the pleached *allées* of Oranienbaum smileth ever the mischievous old Faun as other lovers stray beneath the moss-grown lindens.

"Many are the trystings I have witnessed in these dusky bosquets," he seems to whisper. "Here long syne a fickle Empress plighted troth with a gallant Guardsman.

'Again beneath the sheltering linden's shade,
With newer loves forgetfully she strayed.'

While the infatuated fool who for her fickle kisses faltered not at murder died a raving maniac in banishment and disgrace."

Thus scoffed the cynic Faun the while
He only leered his sly, sardonic smile.

CHAPTER VIII

AN EMPEROR'S FOLLY

The March to Moscow

The Emperor Nap he would set off
On a summer excursion to Moscow;
The fields were green, and the sky was blue,
 Morbleu! Parbleu!
What a pleasant excursion to Moscow!

Four hundred thousand men and more
Must go with him to Moscow!
There were Marshals by the dozen,
And Dukes by the score;
Princes a few, and Kings one or two;
While the fields are so green and the sky so blue,
 Morbleu! Parbleu!
What a pleasant excursion to Moscow!
The Emperor Nap he talked so big
At the thought of the march to Moscow;
He'd make all the Poles come out of their holes,
And beat the Russians and eat the Prussians
For the fields are green, and the sky is blue,
 Morbleu! Parbleu!
And he'd certainly march to Moscow!

But the Russians stoutly they turned to
 Upon the road to Moscow,
 Nap had to fight his way all through,
 They could fight though they could not *parlez vous*,
 But the fields were green and the sky was blue,
 Morbleu! Parbleu!
 And so he got to Moscow!

He found the place too warm for him
 For they set fire to Moscow,
 To get there had cost him much ado,
 And then no better course he knew
 While the fields were green and the sky was blue.
 Morbleu! Parbleu!
 But to march back again from Moscow!

The Russians they stuck close to him
 All on the road from Moscow,
 And Platoff he played them off,
 And Shouvaloff he shovelled them off,
 And Worronzoff he worried them off,
 And Kutousoff he cut them off,
 And Doctoroff he doctored them off,
 And Rodinoff he flogged them off.
 They stuck close to Nap with all their might
 They were on the left and on the right
 Behind and before, and by day and by night,
 He would rather *parlez vous* than fight;
 But he look'd white and he look'd blue.
 Morbleu! Parbleu!

When *parlez-vous* no more would do,
 For they remembered Moscow.

And then came on the frost and snow
 All on the road from Moscow.

The wind and the weather he found in that hour
Cared nothing for him nor for all his power,
For him who, while Europe crouched under his rod,
Put his trust in his fortune and not in his God.
Worse and worse every day the elements grew,
The fields were so white and the sky so blue,
Sacre Bleu! Ventre Bleu!
What a horrible journey from Moscow!

What then thought the Emperor Nap
Upon the road from Moscow?
Why, I ween he thought it small delight
To fight all day and to freeze all night;
And he was besides in a very great fright,
For a whole skin he liked to be in;
And so not knowing what else to do,
When the fields were so white and the sky so blue,
Morbleu! Parbleu!
He stole away I tell you true
Upon the road from Moscow.

Too cold upon the road was he,
Too hot had he been at Moscow;
But colder and hotter he may be
For the grave is colder than Muscovy
And a place there is to be kept in view
Where the fire is red and the brimstone blue,
Morbleu! Parbleu!
Which he must go to
If the Pope say true,
And there he must stay for a very long day;
For from thence there is no stealing away
As there was on the road from Moscow.

ROBERT SOUTHEY, 1812.



"Jean Gaillard Montpellier, Captain of the Emperor's Cuirassiers."

Edouard Detaille

Permission Metropolitan Museum, New York

I

A BLOOD-RED POPPY

A battle-field is an odd place wherein to gather flowers and you may be no less astonished than was I, Jean Gaillard de Montpellier, of the Emperor's Cuirassiers, when I tell you that I found a blood-red poppy on the field of Borodino.

But thus it chanced in the thick of the fray when Platoff's fiery Cossacks made their gallant charge on the *colline* which the Emperor had mounted to gain a view of the battle.

They must have spied his *chapeau de général* silhouetted black against the sunset sky. *Dieu merci!* he had returned to the reserves when with blood-curdling "Hurrahs" (Death, death!) the dauntless Cossacks swept all before their murderous lances and galloped back to the Russian lines.

However, if Napoleon was not on the hill I was. As the Cossacks whirled by, a youthful trooper lunged at me furiously with his lance, and, had I not evaded the thrust by stooping suddenly, he would have effectually forestalled these memoirs. But the breast-plate of a cuirassier is a famous protection against lance-stabs and marking a red spot on the Cossack's caftan, I thrust. When I disengaged, my blade was bloody and my adversary had reeled to the ground.

A comrade lifted him to the saddle, and bore him

from the field; while striving to sheathe my sword I muttered dazedly "*Que diable?*"

For impaled on the point flamed a Blood-Red Poppy!

Thrusting the blossom beneath my dolman I searched about for my helmet. It lay hard by trodden into a shapeless mass. Beside it lay the *Shapka*¹ of the Cossack, and donning my adversary's headgear and triumphantly brandishing his lance, I galloped back to the French lines. This gallant manoeuvre well nigh lost me my skin, for, mistaking me for a Cossack intent upon his life, the Emperor let fly his pistol. Had I not in the nick of time knocked the barrel into the air Jean Gaillard de Montpellier would have gone to join his gallant ancestors. As it was the flame singed the wool from the Cossack cap.

It is not my intention, gentle reader, to recount in detail the bloody battle of Borodino. The same has been most tediously chronicled by heavier pens than mine. Let me only recall to your memory that in the course of this disastrous day an hundred thousand gallant soldiers breathed their last, and how both sides fought to utter exhaustion though neither gained the victory.

At the cessation of hostilities General Kutusof retreated, abandoning Moscow to her fate. But by ill fortune we were too exhausted to pursue *ces Sacre Russes*. Not for a whole week did our troops enter

¹ *Shapka*, Astrakhan cap.

the defenceless city, when its loyal citizens had evacuated, rather than endure the conquerer's yoke.

II

THE QUEEN OF MUSCOVY

Wondrous city, queenliest, fairest,
Crowned with wide and lofty walls,
Like a diadem thou bearest
Temples, palaces and halls.

Cinctured round with fields Elysian
Gardens bright and smiling flowers,
Thou enfoldest, like a vision,
Golden domes and jade-green towers.

Seven thy hills bejewelled over,
Numberless each silver shrine.
Where can mortal eyes discover
Earthly sight so nigh divine?

Who to scale the Kremlin olden
E'er would dare to boast the power?
Who the bright tiara golden
E'er could steal from Ivan's tower?

Who could toll thy bell immortal
Or the Tsar-gun overthrow?
Who before thy sacred portal
Reverence could fail to show?

In thine hour of ruin royal
When thy head with shame was bent,
All thy countless children loyal
Shared with thee thy punishment.

White-walled city, ever lovely,
Thou wast chastened in the fire;
And thy spirit rose above thee,
Like a martyr from the pyre.

When dishonoured and forsaken,
Then in ashes thou didst lie.
From thy slumber now awaken
Rise, and lift thine head on high!

Live through years of fate victorious,
In unending high renown,
Home of Freedom, ever glorious
Russia's jewel and her crown!

VYAZEMSKI.

The myriad jewelled domes of the Kremlin glittered like a colossal diadem in the September sun as we drew rein on the Poklonnaya Hill.

Along our battle-thinned ranks ran a sudden joyous shout: "Moscow! Moscow!" The coveted prize was in our grasp!

"This Asiatic city of innumerable churches," exclaimed the Emperor, "holy Moscow, behold her at last!"

We waited impatiently for the mayor and a deputation of citizens to surrender the keys. But no one came!

At the Emperor's summons I rode into the city to seek quarters for his staff.

The great Borovitzkaya gate loomed before me like

a portal of the Arabian Nights. Struck with awe I bared my head and was about to enter when suddenly Suzette threw a shoe.

Bidding my escort ride on, promising to join them presently, I looked about for a smithy and after diligent searching found a blacksmith who set to work to repair the accident.

As I loitered watching the Russian Vulcan at his forge, suddenly the street resounded with a clatter and a squadron of Cossacks galloped furiously toward me.

You may well believe I fled for my sacred life. Rounding several corners and making a strategic retreat up a lane, I succeeded in giving the rascals the slip. Deeming it injudicious to return to the smithy, I busied myself with reconnoitring the neighbourhood.

In a garden of poppies stood a white-walled palace. Peering through its grille I beheld a deserted courtyard.

The domestics were evidently occupied in the kitchens whence issued a most savoury odour of roasting pullets. Opening the grille I crossed the court and entered a stairway, when again came the raucous cries of the Cossacks. I had unwittingly stumbled into a trap!

My sole hope was to keep covert till the band should disperse. Opening a door stealthily, I entered a lofty chamber. The walls were hung with trophies of the chase. Evidently the "Grande Salle." I reflected, the worst possible place wherein to hide, but I feared to retrace my steps, hearing a tramp of arms in the hallway.

Mounting a spiral stairway I emerged upon a minstrels' gallery and huddled behind the railing prayed devoutly that the musicians might not come. Beneath me stretched a banquet-table laden with tempting viands.

A moment later, laughing and jesting noisily, the Cossacks entered. Great black-bearded brutes in dingy uniforms, they crowded about the board, setting heartily to work with vodka and zakushka.

Presently through a door behind me came a woman's moan.

"Not dead, Batyushka, surely that cannot be true!"

"Dead," replied a man's voice, "thrust through by the sabre of a cursed cuirassier at Borodino. Time enough for grief. Help me now, Xenia, to avenge your lover's death!"

The laughter of the Cossacks made it impossible for me to hear more, save that the voice of the girl rang out in anguished protest.

The Cossacks devoured their *déjeuner* like ravenous wolves, draining glass after glass of vodka as if the fiery fluid were so much water.

Of a sudden they stood to attention, as a white-haired General and his daughter entered. Pallid as death, the girl's eyes glittered like dagger-points and her lips trembled in a pitiful smile.

"Soloniki!"¹ cried the veteran, whom I divined was General Platoff, "when last we gathered it was to

¹ Soloniki, "Little Falcons."

celebrate my daughter's betrothal. You all know how gallantly her lover fell at Borodino, striving in vain to earn her hand. Comrades, you well know my sacred pledge. He who brings the head of Napoleon at his saddle-bow shall wed my daughter. Is there none will avenge her lover's death? Two hundred thousand rubles and my daughter to the man who will kill the French tyrant!"

Drawing their sabres as one, the Cossacks sprang upon the chairs. *Mon Dieu!* How they did shout! Only those who have heard their blood-curdling hurrahs on the battle-field can imagine that weird, barbaric yell!

Emptying a great vase, Xenia tossed blood-red poppies to the eager Cossacks. Fastening the blossoms to their caftans, they toasted the aged General and his fair daughter.

"The Flower of Death!" they shouted clapping their hands. "Dance, dance for us, Galubushka!" Leaping upon the table, Xenia danced while the Cossacks sang:

To Russia

My birth-land hail to Thee!
Bright land of destiny,
Hail, Mother, hail!
Hail thy great forests fair!
Vast steppes and mountains bare,
Hail Sea and Cloud and Air!
Hail, Russia, hail!

TOLSTOI.

No one who has never heard that stirring hymn can form any conception of its grand emotional appeal.

With sinuous grace the girl whirled about in a wild moujik dance, then swayed dizzily and sank into her father's outstretched arms.

With trembling footsteps he bore her from the room.

Noisily the Cossacks concluded their riotous repast. Presently their lances clanked in the courtyard as they mounted and rode away. Then all was still.

Turning the doorknob stealthily I peered into the chamber, then recoiled in stupefaction. Stretched upon the bed in seeming death lay my assailant of Borodino. As I gazed in wonder I seemed to witness a miracle. Of a sudden the dead man opened his eyes.

Xenia bent above her lover. "Taras!" she cried. "You live! You live!"

Tears of joy welled in her eyes as he covered her face with caresses.

Descending the stairway I was about to leave the palace when a din of maudlin laughter rose from the courtyard.

Liberated by the Russian Governor with orders to put the city to flame, a band of convicts staggered from a raid upon the wine-cellars, when a sudden cry broke from the doorway.

"Leave the house!" Xenia commanded imperiously.

"Nay, Durotchka,"¹ snarled the leader, "not till

¹ *Durotchka*, "Little fool."

you pay a handsome ransom! For my part I'll take this diamond."

Snatching at the girl's brooch he fumbled her breast with his vile fingers.

Springing forward I struck the ruffian with the flat of my sword. His knife flashed and before I could evade the stroke, drove through the fleshy part of my arm. A dozen times I slashed him with my sabre, but the brute died biting my foot. Striking out at random I drove the rabble cowering through the courtyard, then barred the gate.

"*Très bien*," cried Xenia, clapping her hands.

"But they will only return in greater numbers, I fear. If Mademoiselle will accord me hospitality. I offer my sword for her defence."

"The sword is a brave one," she mused; "'tis pity the uniform is not to my liking."

She surveyed me critically, and I was pleased to see that her eyes gleamed with appreciation. *Ma foi!* The girl did not lack intelligence. She could recognize a fine figure of a man when he stood before her.

"Mademoiselle approves?" I queried, with full confidence in her assent.

"Yes, I will trust you," she smiled. "The house is yours with the exception of the apartment of my invalid mother, who refuses to leave. That is why I am here."

The humour of the situation must have revealed

itself in my eyes, for lowering her lashes, she bit her lip.

In this willful maid was mingled the audacity of a grande dame and the irresistible naïveté of a child.

Thus she eyed me so trustfully that I was willing to grant anything. A cadet might be duped by such arts, I reflected, but not Jean Gaillard de Montpellier, veteran of innumerable *affaires de coeur*; moreover I was in the enemy's country and must be wary of ambuscades. However, such skirmishes have never frightened me and I foresaw victory.

With a graceful courtesy she whispered: "Till supper, Monsieur," seeking to end the interview.

But a spirit of deviltry possessed me, and taking her hand I smiled: "Mademoiselle's poppies are famous. If my fair enemy will but grant me the favour she showed her Cossack friends."

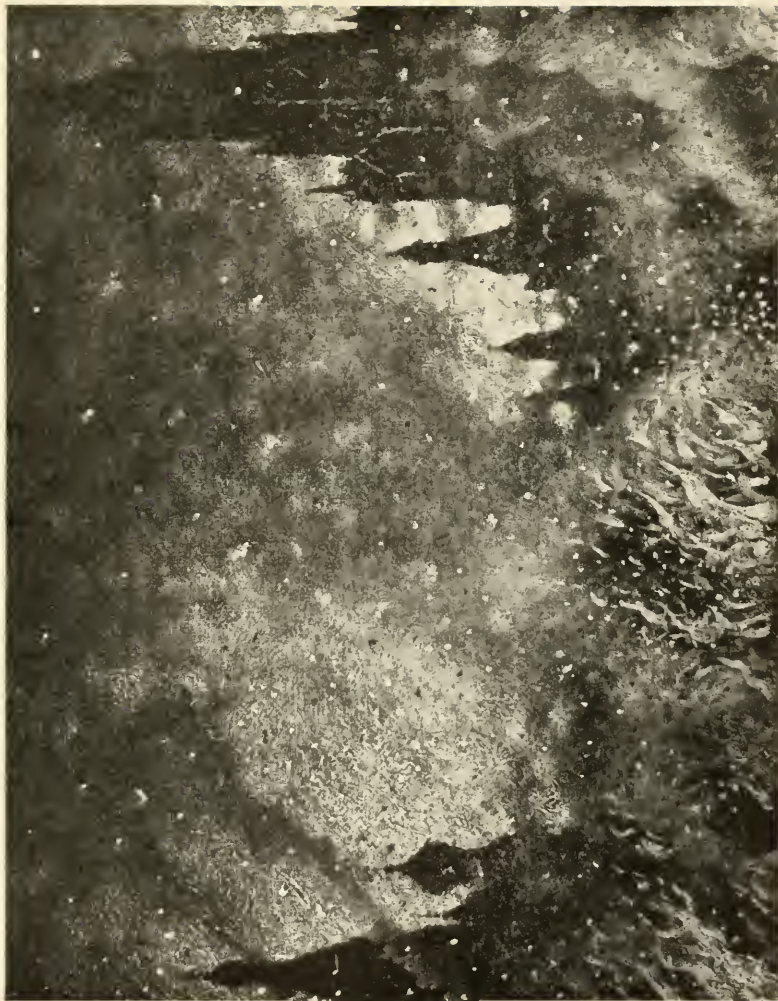
"Since Monsieur has played the spy he is doubtless aware how my poppies may be purchased," she flashed indignantly.

"The fate of an assassin is too dear a price even for so fair a prize," I replied bowing deeply.

The scarlet tide mounted to her cheeks. "Monsieur might obtain the token from one of my friends," she said with irony.

"*C'est déjà fait*," I returned, drawing from my dolman the blood-stained poppy of Borodino.

The colour left her cheeks, but she held herself well



The Burning of Moscow

"The sight we looked upon was magnificent and terrible."

Vassili Verestchagin

P. C. G. Toni Lardau Co.,

in hand. As she took the blossom the petals sifted through her fingers. Reverently she gathered them up as though they were precious gems.

"Monsieur knows that the officer who wore this was not an assassin. Show me a Cossack who has attempted the life of the Emperor dishonourably, and you may keep this flower of death!"

With a farewell flash of defiance, she swept through the doorway.

III

A FOILED PLOT

The burning of Moscow was the most grand, sublime, and terrific spectacle the world has ever beheld.

NAPOLEON.

All the way from Borodino we had marched through smouldering villages and devastated farms. Before their flight the moujiks had fired izbas, barns, and hayricks. No shelter could be found for men nor forage for our mounts. The châteaux were still flaming as we passed. These inexorable Russians would leave us *absolument rien!* In Moscow at last we counted on food, harbourage, and loot.

As to the first we were bitterly disappointed. Shelter was there in plenty, but neither by commandeering nor purchase might we obtain provisions. The market was in a blaze and the peasants would bring nothing

to the city. Vodka we found in abundance and our soldiery proceeded promptly to get gloriously drunk. There was little or no water. The water-mains and the ropes of all wells had been cut. The grave significance of this did not strike us at the time nor did the random fires alarm me as I surveyed the town from the Borovitskaya Gate.

In truth I was wholly engrossed in selecting fitting quarters for the Emperor from the *embarras de richesse* of sumptuous suites of the Kremlin. In the end I fixed upon a private apartment in the western wing of the Winter Palace as most perfectly adapted to his comfort. With all due solicitude I ordered the chefs to prepare dinner, posted guards, and assigned each domestic of the Imperial Household to his proper task.

Scarcely had I finished when Murat arrived in a state of exaltation. There had been a futile attempt to hold the gates, but our gunners had promptly annihilated the defenders and the Kremlin was ours.

Beneath the palace were the stables which I proceeded to inspect. Stalls there were sufficient for our mounts, but the bins were empty, and no water in the troughs.

A groom told me the grain was brought through the Water-Gate. Though it was open, I saw no barges on the river.

“Bring water!” I commanded.

"There are no buckets," he protested, and looking about, I saw he spoke the truth.

Hay was heaped in a corner, and I bade him fill Suzette's manger. She sniffed suspiciously, throwing back her ears.

"One would think you smelled powder, old girl," I laughed, patting her neck.

Scrutinizing closely, I detected upon the fibres a fine black dust. A trail on the floor led to a locked door.

"*Qu'est ce que c'est? La cave?*" I questioned; but the groom had vanished.

Forcing the door I found myself in a dark passage whence came a muffled sound as of hammering.

"*Fichtre!*" thought I. "This will bear investigating."

Following a faint gleam, I descended to a vaulted cellar beneath the Emperor's bed-chamber. It was filled to the ceiling with kegs. A bearded *moujik* sprang from behind a barrel and eyed me wildly. With clenched fists I sprang toward him.

"Beware!" he warned, pointing first to the kegs, then to the lantern.

Only thought of the Emperor's peril kept me from throttling him there and then. Grasping the lantern he slunk swiftly down the passage. The flickering light showed a snakelike fuse leading to the door.

I rushed after the fleeing *moujik* and catching his blouse, struck him upon the head. He crumpled like a leaf, and the blouse rent, revealing the uniform of a

Cossack. His bandaged right arm told me that this pretended *moujik* was no other than my antagonist of Borodino. The thought that I had thus struck a wounded man so overcame me that I foolishly loosed my hold. In an instant the Cossack leaped through the Water-Gate and vanished.

On the ground, grimed with gunpowder, lay a scarlet poppy! The General's daughter had bestowed upon her lover another token. Recalling her promise I thrust it in my gauntlet and retraced my steps.

As I stepped over the threshold of the magazine, someone suddenly shut the door and bolted it behind me. I kicked and shouted but to no avail.

"It will not be long," thought I, "before my cuirassiers will come," and waited with what patience I could muster.

Presently I heard a muffled trampling overhead. The Emperor and his suite had arrived.

Again I shouted, but there was no response. Mounting on the kegs I beat upon the stone-vaulted ceiling. An empty echo was my only answer.

Suddenly I saw something which froze my very blood; a little sinuous spark creeping down the passage to the magazine! Some one had fired the fuse! In a few seconds, the Kremlin, the Emperor and Jean Gaillard would be blown to fragments.

In fascination I watched the smouldering spark stealing slowly toward the keg of gunpowder, then with

a sudden effort I roused myself and stamped upon the burning fuse. In vain the flame only ran more swiftly. Drawing my sabre I slashed at the fiery serpent. I seized it with my naked hands. I tugged and strained, scorching my fingers, but the fuse continued to burn. When it was within a foot of the barrel I slashed again. A blinding flash, and a deafening report. Then all was dark.

When I woke to consciousness, I was in the Emperor's chamber. With a smile of tender solicitude, Napoleon bent over me.

I strove in vain to voice my bewilderment.

"Montpellier," he laughed, "thou camest as nigh to Heaven as e'er thou wilt! Thank thy stars that, though the explosion elevated a captain to the Imperial throne, your Emperor was not committed to inferno."

Scratching my poll, I stared in amaze. "I possess a thick skull," I muttered, "but that I should thus have battered my way through a vaulted ceiling is beyond belief."

"Nay," protested Murat, "through the chute they hoist wine from the cellars. The concussion thrust and set you, plentifully begrimed, like a bottle of ancient vintage on the Emperor's sideboard."

"Mon Gaillard," laughed the Emperor, "thy head of iron and heart of gold shall not be forgotten."

"Sire," I faltered, "I implore thee. Make haste to flee ere the assassin return!"

"Alas, too late!" groaned Murat, drawing the curtains. "Look! Moscow is aflame from the Petrovka¹ to the Kremlin."

The sight we looked upon was magnificent and terrible beyond description. The entire city was arched with flames. A cloud of smoke bespangled with myriads of golden sparks overhung the Kremlin like a purple pall. Ever and anon there resounded a mighty reverberation as another building shot into the air, throwing up a geyser of flames.

"Summon the fire department!" commanded Napoleon calmly.

"Sire, it has left the city," I explained.

"Harness the cavalry to the engines!"

"There are no engines, Mon Empereur," was my hopeless retort.

He pondered, a deep frown furrowing his brow.

"Bid our troops form file and pass buckets from the river."

"There is not a bucket in all Moscow," I protested despairingly. "Every Russian is an incendiary."

"I would never have believed it," he muttered dazedly. "To wreck their own city! Such ferocious patriotism is inconceivable!"²

"We are losing time," grumbled Murat, "we must find a refuge for the Emperor."

¹ *Petrovka*, an avenue on which stood the palaces of the boyars.

² Moscow burned September, 1812.



“‘Look Sire!’ exclaimed Murat, ‘Moscow is burning in a dozen places!’”

Vassili Verestchagin

P. C. G. Toni Landau Co.

He swept the city with his glass: "Note, Sire, yonder white-walled palace near the river islanded by gardens!" he cried eagerly.

The Emperor took the glass: "Commandeer it, Jean Gaillard," he commanded. "Establish there my suite and body guard. Hurry boats to the water-gate. We leave immediately."

I needed not even look. It was the Palace of the Poppy Garden!

Reflecting that the Emperor must know to what manner of hostess he thus rashly trusted himself, I recounted my recent experience.

He mused a moment standing with folded arms, immersed in thought.

"Have no fear," he smiled, "no assassin would think to seek me there. Moreover, I have a fancy to see your little Cossack. *Ce n'est pas une type ordinaire!*"

IV

THE EMPEROR BEFOOLED

Again I entered the house of the Poppy Garden. This time it could scarcely be termed an intrusion, for my name was scrawled in Muscovite characters upon the gate.

Jingling his keys the dvornik came from the lodge.

"Your Munificence will pardon," he apologized, "but there are other guests!"

I looked about in astonishment—the court teemed with children! There they lay asleep on the costly rugs, as snug as in bed, while white-coifed Sisters of Charity glided silently among them.

The rooms within were crammed with cots, in each of which lay a little red-cheeked curly head. “What an astounding transformation!” I thought, as a white-robed novice approached whom I recognized as Xenia.

“I was sure you would not mind,” she smiled, “the orphanage took fire so I bade them bring the poor waifs here.”

An unwonted light glowed in her eyes. I longed to take her in my arms but bethought me of my urgent errand.

“The Emperor would commandeer my house!” she flashed. “Never as long as Xenia Platoff lives!”

“*Mais Mademoiselle*,” I protested, extending the powder-begrimed poppy, “I have now a right to demand. Your lover has striven to assassinate the Emperor. Tell me if such treachery meets with your approval.”

Incredulity, then indignation filled her eyes as I recounted my tale.

“That could not have been Taras,” she insisted. “There are other Knights of the Poppy. But even if I would, where can I find room to house your sovereign?”

I pointed to the wing she had said was occupied by herself and mother, isolated from the main mansion I noted, doubtless to give the invalid seclusion.

"For the night," I asserted, "that will serve. Tomorrow we will find other refuge for the orphans."

"But my mother!" she insisted.

"I will persuade her to surrender her apartment to the Imperial guest," I smiled, approaching the ante-room.

She clung to me in entreaty. "No, No! Do not enter that room," she pleaded excitedly.

Firmly but gently I insisted. As I opened the door a low moan rose from the curtained bed.

"He is dying," sobbed Xenia. "Have you no heart, no compassion? For love of Heaven let him rest in peace!"

"I have killed him!" I faltered, feeling for my foe only the keenest sympathy.

Xenia flung back the curtains. Pale and ghastly, his eyes aflame with fever, lay the young officer of Borodino. No words were needed to tell me how she loved him, but they gushed in a piteous stream.

"Save him!" she pleaded, "and my heart shall forever bless you!"

As I strove to reassure her, of a sudden the Emperor strode into the garden, astonishment and anger written upon his face.

"Montpellier, what is the meaning of this farce?" he thundered. "Are my commands to be ignored? Throw those brats into the gutter!"

Xenia sprang forward and fell upon her knees.

"Sire," she begged, "do not leave those helpless orphans to perish in the streets."

He started violently, then stood spell-bound by her beauty. Seeing her advantage she pleaded eloquently.

The Emperor scarcely listened but devoured her with his eyes. After a moment he raised her cavalierly. "Since you so wish, Mademoiselle. But do not display toward me the cruelty I would have shown your protégés. Surely you have a chamber that will serve me for the night!"

Xenia smiled assent and led the way into the mansion. A furtive hand-clasp and I hastened to the bedside of the dying Cossack. A plan had come to me. Surmising that the south wing would not escape the Emperor's scrutiny, I feared that time was short for what I had to do. Xenia's lover fortunately, was unconscious and could offer no resistance. Scarcely had I finished when I heard their steps in the hallway.

"The shock may mean her death!" protested Xenia anxiously.

"True, Sire," I declared, "I fear the lady will not live."

The Emperor gave me a look that congealed my blood. I hung my head ignominiously.

"Gaillard," he sneered, "thou hast never lied to me! Nevertheless I will see this dying woman. Have no fear, Mademoiselle (for Xenia would, I think, have fainted but for my timely grasp), I will not disturb your mother. Lead on, Montpellier," he commanded.

I entered the chamber and drew back the bed-curtains. Xenia gasped in wonderment, for on the pillow, framed by a ruffled cap, lay a woman's face! A scarf was knotted daintily about her throat. I thanked my stars that I had brought my razor, but I had to work fast to remove the stubborn beard of the Cossack in time.

The Emperor lifted Mademoiselle's hand to his lips: "A thousand pardons," he made apology, "Montpellier, Let us seek quarters elsewhere. Again, Mademoiselle, pray forgive my unwelcome intrusion!"

With that he strode through the poppy garden, turned abruptly at the gate, and I fear, noted that Xenia had flung herself sobbing into my arms. If so, he gave no sign save a faint ironic smile.

As for Jean Gaillard, he forgot that Xenia felt for him merely gratitude, and, hopeless though his love, joy welled in his heart.

'Tis Autumn! Colourless and bare—
The garden lies, bereft of sunny bloom,
Lone, withered leaves whirl down the frosty air
And all is silence, nakedness and gloom.

Yet I with rapture drunk like wine,
Youth's flaming ardours battling in my breast
Straining thy heart to mine in love's unrest,
Through tear-dimmed eyes in hopeless grief I see
That I can never tell, Beloved mine,
How wondrous fair thou art, Dear-heart, to me! ¹

¹ Alexis Tolstoi.

Next morning the Emperor commanded

“Form your regiment into a fire brigade, save all you can! Continue to keep the house of the Poppy Garden as your domicile till further orders. You are more fortunate than I.” There was a bitter note in his voice.

“Were it not, *mon enfant*, that I owe you my life,” he smiled wistfully, “I would be tempted to take the field as your rival.”

I burned to reply that I cherished no hope for the love of Mademoiselle Xenia, that her heart was loyal to her Cossack Captain, but my lips were sealed.

A battle with flame followed. For days we fought the fire as never a living enemy. At last we conquered and the conflagration smouldered out.

At night I returned to the Platoff palace, though in truth I scarcely slept. Mademoiselle Xenia I seldom saw, so unremitting her devotion to the wounded Cossack.

One evening I heard her sing to him a lullaby:

Gone Day's sunshine bright and gleaming,
Faded fast to shadow deep,
Night-time comes with blissful dreaming,
Love, 'tis time for sleep!

Hark, the wind-blown raindrops tearful
Mid the leafage wail and weep!
Laden clouds enshroud us fearful,
Love, 'tis time for sleep!

Lo! From heaven, translucent winging,
Timorous moon-beams peer and peep,
Stilled, the nightingale's sweet singing.
Love, 'tis time for sleep!

Gone the sun's last golden gleaming,
Faded fast to shadow deep.
Slumber laps my soul in dreaming,
Love 'tis time to sleep!

FOFANOW.

For days the Cossack Captain wavered between life and death, but love conquered and he fought his way back to recovery. I surmised that Xenia was planning his escape as soon as he should be strong enough to join her father's Cossacks hovering in the environs.

As I witnessed the lovers' happiness my heart was sorely smitten, but I was doomed to know still greater anguish.

V

A SHATTERED IDOL

For a month Napoleon waited the Czar's answer to his imperious demands; but none came. Moscow meanwhile became uninhabitable. It was impossible to winter in the famished city. The Emperor realized, as did all of us, that there remained nothing but to abandon the capital and retreat.

It is indeed a terrible disillusion to lose one's faith in a superior officer. With blind devotion I had worshipped

mon Général, but was fated to find my golden god but gilded clay. It was not because I saw him for the first time out-generaled, that from the sagging shoulders and glassy stare I knew he recognized the end, not alone of his dream of conquering Russia, but of his colossal dream of world dominion; it was not alone that my indomitable hero had met defeat. Failure oftentimes leaves a truly great man none the less invincible, but that my Emperor could stoop to an action base and ignoble was to me incredible. And yet my dawning suspicion flamed into damning conviction.

On the eve when her Cossack lover was to have struck for liberty, Xenia came to me, her face white as death:

"Taras has been taken," she stammered, "some one has betrayed us!" "*Dieu Merci*," she did not accuse me. "I shall go to the Emperor," she asserted, "and plead for his life."

"*Mais non!*" I protested. "You do not know his utter heartlessness. Napoleon would grant your suit only on conditions you could not possibly accept. I will see him and plead your cause as best I may."

Tonnerre de Dieu! Shall I ever forget that interview?

His jaw set like a snarling wolf, in a tone of thunder he commanded me to state my errand. His evident agitation steadied my nerves and I poured out my heart in a volley of vain entreaty. Long before I had

finished, I knew that the task was futile. His steel grey eyes congealed me to the bone.

"You are a bold lover, Jean Gaillard," he smiled unpleasantly.

I protested that my love was wholly unrequited.

"*A la bonne heure!*" he laughed exultantly, "the field is clear for me!"

I gaped in amaze, scarce crediting my ears.

"But Sire," I insisted, "the lady's heart is pledged."

"*Fichtre!* that signifies nothing," he sneered. "Imbecile, in blind infatuation you have allowed her to twist you around her finger, forgetting allegiance to me. Do not imagine for a moment I am unaware of your treachery. I have known it from the first. You have repaid all my generosity by sheltering my murderer!"

The scarlet flush on my face proclaimed my guilt.

"*Traître!* The full measure of your treachery is known to me. I waited to see how far you would go, wondering if you would wear the scarlet poppy and enroll yourself in the ranks of my assassins. Who knows but you might have won the coveted prize! *Une femme sans coeur, sans honte* who sold herself at auction for the price of my paltry life! For such a creature there can be but one name and that an ugly one!"

I could bear no more; "*Menteur!*" I cried, unsheathing my sabre.

"Which only proves the truth of what I said," he smiled cynically.

Dumb with rage and humiliation I threw my sword at his feet.

"*Cela est mieux*," he grunted, striking a bell.

In a moment a grenadier entered.

"Captain Montpellier is under arrest," said the Emperor curtly.

VI

A FOOL'S ERRAND

Days dragged by and still I pined in the Kremlin dungeon obsessed by dark foreboding.

I doubted not that Taras Dashkof had been stood against the wall and shot.

Scarcely did I hope a better fate for myself. The lightest sentence I might expect would be cashierment from the army and eternal disgrace. But my apprehensions redoubled at thought of Xenia. What unspeakable dishonour lay in store for the plaything of an emperor!

Peering between bars of the narrow *meutrière* which served as window I looked across the courtyard. The Emperor paced his chamber, hands clenched behind his back.

After a moment, flushed and breathless, Xenia entered. Despite my warning she had resolved to risk everything in a desperate appeal. I could almost hear

her piteous sobs as she kneeled in vain entreaty before that grim, impassive idol.

With a gallant pleasantry the Emperor raised her to a place by his side in the window seat. His every action was courtesy itself. How I cursed him for his craftily-assumed airs of fatherly solicitude.

With hypocritical care he dried her eyes, and a moment later they were chatting in the most intimate manner, as if they had been life-long friends.

Of a sudden Xenia seized his hand and covered it with kisses. The consummate scoundrel had granted her request! I shuddered to think at what price! But the arch-gambler was too crafty to display his cards. With imperial grace, as if from a Fontainebleau levée, he bowed her to the door and smilingly bade *au revoir*.

Well I realized that this was not to be their last meeting. I groaned, prayed and cursed, groping blindly for some way out.

In vain I wrote to Xenia, the missive was intercepted by a censor and returned with the admonition that all correspondence was strictly forbidden.

At last, when I feared I was abandoned to the Moscow mob, since the retreat had been commanded, the Emperor summoned me to his presence.

I was grievously shocked by the transformation he had undergone during these last weeks. He had aged incredibly. His hair had suddenly silvered and his head was bowed as by the weight of centuries. Deep lines

furrowed his brow and his lips drooped in hopelessness. He stared blankly at the fire, head sunk upon breast. All my rancour was drowned in compassion.

At my footstep he straightened and faced me with a frown.

"*Eh bien, mon Gaillard,*" he blurted, "have you sobered up at last?"

"Your Majesty has never seen me drunk, such vices as I have are graver," I rejoined.

"*Fichtre!*" he sneered, fingering his snuff-box. "Love, glory, religion! They are all intoxication. We have each had our little spree, Montpellier. Now let us show the world there is sober stuff in us yet! *Tenez*, forget our little misunderstanding, and take back your sword. *Ecoutez, mon brave*, I have selected you for a mission of vital importance."

I mumbled incoherent acknowledgment.

"Don't interrupt!" he thundered. "We are having some small bickering with the Cossacks near Malo Yaroslavetz. Old Papa Platoff is resolved we shall not return by way of Poland, where vast stores are concentrated. His plan is to force us to retreat over the region we have recently devastated. *Eh bien, ce n'est pas mon idée!* I have just learned that the King of Naples¹ is in desperate straits. I shall cross the Moskwa, gain the front by dawn and, assembling the Guard, surprise Platoff by a flank attack. I shall ride in my travelling-

¹ Marshal Murat.

carriage with only a small escort of cuirassiers under your command. What do you think of my project?"

I recognized at once the utter futility of his plan, and though delighted to serve in so reckless a venture, warned the Emperor not to needlessly expose himself.

"It is by no means a desperate coup," he insisted obstinately. "With his *sacré* vanity Murat declared a truce, establishing a neutral zone where he caracoles in his comic-opera uniform to the great delight of the Cossacks. This truce does not expire until noon tomorrow. Till then no Russian will lift his lance against any party he may lead."

"Then the Marshal will accompany us?" I hazarded.

"*Pas du tout*, he has his hands full. But we will trick the Cossacks. Decked in his scarlet and gold, mounted on a white charger, you would deceive even the troops of Murat."

He placed in my hands a sealed envelope.

"When you reach the summit of the range," he commanded, "read these orders! Meantime do not address a word to me; I am much fatigued and must get what rest I may."

Bidding me make haste, as the party would set out at sundown, he turned and strode away.

With my characteristic zeal and efficiency I attacked my task. I was most gratified at my reinstatement in the good graces of the Emperor, and though I could not love him as before, duty bound me the more now that

his need was so imperative. My heart ached as I noted the look of utter disheartenment upon his face.

Torn with longing to see Xenia if only for a moment, I penned a word of farewell, and giving the note to a courier, bade him bear it to the House of the Poppy Garden. Then robing myself in the King of Naples' parrot-tinted plumage, I wished Mademoiselle might have seen how it became my manly figure. How trivial often are man's meditations during supreme crises! I recall pondering what a shame it would be if some poppy-bedecked Cossack should ruin the glorious uniform and its gallant wearer before he had accomplished his reckless task.

As the sun reddened the golden domes of the Kremlin to burnished copper, riding in front of the Emperor's coach, I crossed the Moskwa with a squad of my trusted cuirassiers bringing up the rear. Down avenues of silver birches and around tortuous bends, through the misty moonlight we cantered.

The river gleaming between willow copses, a ruined mill; whitewashed churches, ghostly in the shadows, the manor of a boyar with straggling out-houses and threshing floor where hungry magpies gleaned the scattered grain; then we plunged into a forest of lowering firs, and after mounting a high hill, gained a lookout commanding the valley.

Here I halted, having out-distanced my comrades, and looking down recognized beneath the rays of the



“My cuirassiers were engaged in a desperate scrimmage with the Cossacks.”

Edouard Detaille

Permission Metropolitan Museum

waning moon the valley of the Lonja, the *mise-en-scène* of Murat's vain escapades. Silent but not deserted lay the mist-shrouded valley. Between me and my destination, the castle of Yaroslav, there glittered the lights of an hundred bivouac fires! I was in a dilemma. It was impossible to determine whether they were camp-fires of my friends the Guard, or of my foes the Cossacks. You may well imagine this gave me pause.

Mindful of the Emperor's injunction not to disturb him, I halted the coach and rode forward to reconnoitre.

Suddenly from the surrounding underbrush rang out a volley of musketry, as a squadron of Cossacks charged furiously toward me!

I whipped pistol from holster and crouching behind Suzette's neck emptied both barrels.

Behind the coach my cuirassiers were engaged in a desperate scrimmage with the bandits, two of whom had slunk forward and attempted to cut the traces.

Drawing my sabre I slashed one ruffian over the head and sent him rolling beneath the horses' hoofs. With another lunge I thrust his comrade through the chest. As I disengaged I turned and met a swords-man the equal of myself. *Ma foi!* there was sword-play worthy of a better audience.

As I parried a thrust of my opponent, a Cossack surprised me from the rear, lunging suddenly upon me and throwing me from my horse.

Clutching the Cossack's lance I strove to wrest it from him, when an officer shouted:

"Do not kill him; take him prisoner. It is the French Marshal Murat!"

Peering through the dusk I recognized Taras Dashkof.

For a moment we glared at each other like two panthers about to spring. Suddenly I recoiled in horror at sight of the poppy on his breast. The Emperor's life lay at stake. Only Jean Gaillard de Montpellier stood between him and assassination.

On the brink of the cliff we waged a battle to the death. At last as I felt his strength ebb, I tightened my grip on the scoundrel's throat. His eyes started from their sockets, he reeled and fell.

The door of the coach opened.

"Hold in the name of the Emperor!" cried a woman's voice.

My head swam and I could scarcely credit my senses as I recognized Xenia. She had been the Emperor's companion through that long night-ride, on her way to Paris as his paramour!

She bent over her Cossack lover striving vainly to make him speak.

My first thought was for the Emperor. I staggered to the coach and groped blindly in the darkness.

But there was no one there! Never had there been anyone in the coach but Xenia! This then, was my Fool's Errand.

"Your French Czar is a true nobleman," she smiled. "He set me at liberty with a passport granting safe return to my Father."

Taking a poppy from her breast, she gave it to me. "Keep this token," she begged, "in memory of my gratitude!"

I placed the blossom beneath my cuirass, and bent and kissed her hand.

There was a clatter of hoofs and a white-bearded giant galloped up the road.

"Father!" laughed Xenia, springing into the Cossack's arms.

It was in truth General Platoff, who, following his wild soldiery, had ridden unwittingly to a rendezvous with his daughter.

"Well, Taras," he growled, "the Emperor has eluded you again, but at least you have caught the Princess."

While the blushing couple strove to console one another after the manner of lovers, he turned to me.

"As for you, my would-be Marshal Murat, I set you at liberty. Felicitate yourself that you fell into the hands of a Cossack yet came out with a whole skin! Take your French centaurs back with you. I have no use for them having more of my own than I need."

Thanking him for his magnanimity I placed my orders in his hands. With no less surprise than myself he read the following astonishing missive:

On reaching the Neutral Zone Captain Montpellier will advance under a flag of truce until he establishes contact with the Cossack out-posts, when he will demand a conference with General Platoff. Having met the general he will conduct him to the coach where he will present him with his daughter.

After safely accomplishing this mission Colonel de Montpellier will return to Malo Yaroslavetz to take command of the Third Cuirassiers.

Trusting that the Colonel will excuse his Emperor for having sent him upon a Fool's Errand

NAPOLEON.

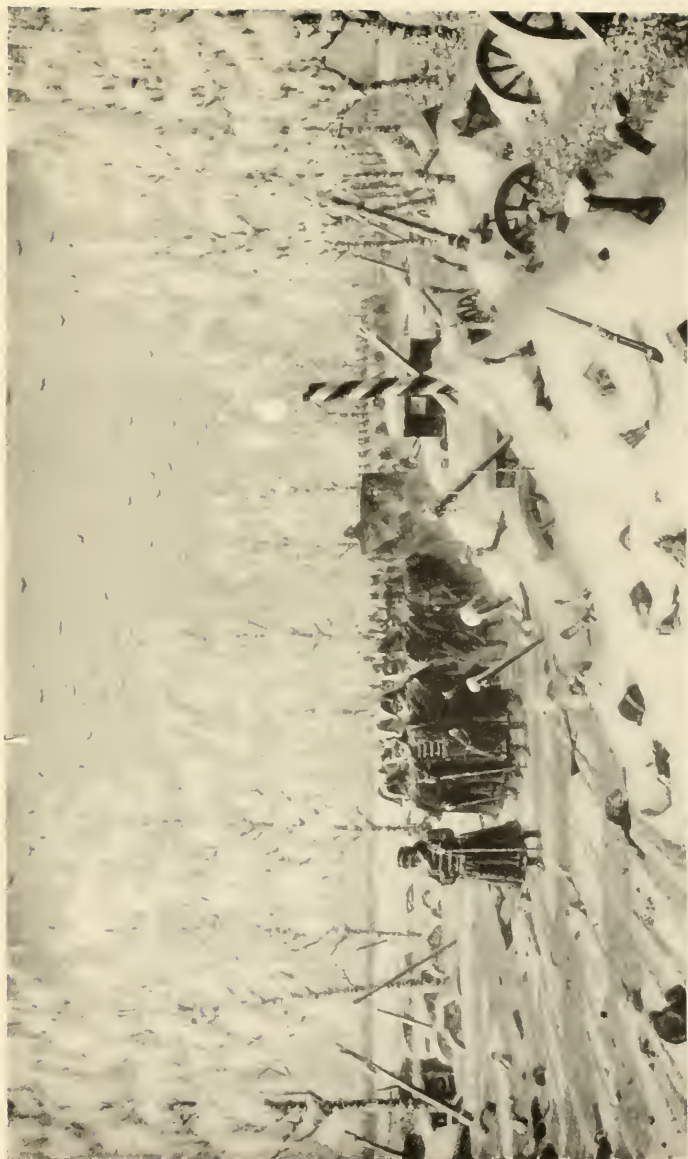
Non, mes amis, there is no mistake in the designation "Colonel," in proof of which do me the favor to regard the *médaille d'honneur* which accompanied my promotion. It was well deserved, though 'tis I who say it as should not.

All the length of that disastrous retreat Platoff's ruthless Cossacks harried us, like crows a dying horse. I was in the thick of the fighting under Ney, the fire-brand.

Ma foi! we gave the Russians all they wanted, but winter overcame us and our starved and frozen troops could fight no more.

At the Beresina we made our last stand. At the bridge I recognized Taras, a blood-red poppy on his fur pelisse.

"Run, run!" he shouted, "before we fire the bridge. By our Lady of Kazan! I know a brave and honourable soldier when I see one."



"And then came on the frost and snow."

Vassili Verestchagin

P. C. G. T. Landau Co.,

I shall never forget to my dying day the hurrahs of the Cossacks, the roar of the artillery and the agonizing shrieks of our soldiery stampeding one another in a desperate *sauve-qui-peut*. The cries of the wounded, the trampled women and children¹ swept over the hand-rail by the plunging steeds of our cannoneers!

For hours I stood with my gallant comrades protecting the retreat, till at last came Ney's order to cross and fire the bridge. Just before it crashed into the freezing water I paused on the toppling planks and shouted *Vive l'Empereur!* in the teeth of the astounded Cossacks.

Time heals all wounds and gentle memories have helped me forget the horror of that interminable retreat through the Russian snows. The scarlet poppies in my garden no longer recall the blood-stains of my lost comrades, and the Folly of an Emperor, who led an army of four hundred thousand into Russia, of whom a paltry tenth returned.

How I escaped to tell my tale I know not. Huddling by night over a fire which served to thaw into agony my freezing limbs, gnawing like a wolf raw morsels of horse-flesh, on I struggled ever westward strewing the road with equipment and the precious trifles I had looted from the Russes.

But one day, starved but happy, we entered Dantzic, and the long campaign was over at last.

¹ Camp followers.

As a silver-haired pensioner I doze in my sunshiny garden, I fondle a faded poppy, and dream of my phantom Russian sweetheart, mine only, alas! in dream!

Love Ineffaceable

In vain I strive her image sweet to kill,
Whom once I loved a bye-gone youthful day
So tenderly and true—who oft did fill
With passion's flaming hopes and black dismay
A heart that ruthless time hath failed to still.
In vain I fondly seek 'mid pleasures gay
From newer dreams oblivion to distill
And with new loves the old to drive away.

In roseate hours of vain delusive sleep,
Beside my restless couch she seems to stand,
And on my brow she lays her cooling hand
And calls to me with accents fond and deep.
Break, kindly Death, this soul-enthraling chain
Or set me free with her to live again!

KOLTSOV.



**"A rifle slung across his back,
His caftan, cap of astrakan,
Proclaim him plain a wild Cossack
From distant Dnieper's endless span."**

W. Kowalski
P. C. G. Toni Landau Co.,

CHAPTER IX

THE EXILE

What mystic figure meets mine eyes,
That through the morning mist doth creep,
From out his hut in sordid guise
Along the bank of Lena deep?

A rifle slung across his back
His caftan, cap of astrakhan
Proclaim him plain a wild Cossack
From distant Dnieper's endless span.

Dark is his mien, for ruthless fate
Hath furrowed deep that pallid brow
And filled his loving heart with hate
And crowned his raven locks with snow.

Lo! westward now he fain would roam,
His eyes with longing gently glow;
And torn with grief at thought of home
He sadly sighs and whispers low:

"O happy fields of long ago,
My face ye ne'er again shall see!
O loved Ukraine, my eager feet
Will ne'er again return to thee!

"In vain with hope forever flames
My wounded but unconquered soul;

The lamp of life burns dim and low,
I ne'er may gain the long-sought goal."

What is this unknown captive's name?
Or where his home may no one tell.
Long years have lagged since first he came
Unto this far-off frozen hell,
Alone, unknown and clothed in shame
In exile dark fore'er to dwell.

Yet no black deed of mortal sin,
Hath brought him to this evil place,
Nor graved the piteous lines within
His placid sorrow-sculptured face;
Though ne'er did marble ever show
More mild a gaze or white a brow.

Serene his eyes but with the calm
Of Baikal's waters ere the blast,
Foreboding doom of secret harm
And rife with latent tempests vast.

Alone he wanders without cease
Like some dark spirit seeking peace
And none may ever learn his name
Or know the secret of his shame.

Then listen, Friend, a marvel see,
How strange the ways of destiny,
Beneath this ragged caftan old
There glows a heart of purest gold!

RYLYEEV.

I

A WOMAN'S FAITHLESSNESS

Of all women in Petrograd Olga Pavlovna Ravaloff
was the one Andrei Petrovitch least desired to see.



"His Great Master"

J. E. Repin

P. C. G. Toni Landau Co.

But finding on his desk a delicately scented note, though he recognized the handwriting, he broke the seal and read:

DEAR ANDREIUSHA:

Do not think harshly of me nor turn your heart from love because of my former perfidy.

My life with my husband becomes daily more unendurable, and tomorrow I shall leave Pavel forever.

I must see you again, not to beg forgiveness, for I fear that would be futile, but to warn you of an impending danger.

Your ruthless revolutionary articles in *The Light*, attacking the autocracy have marked you for destruction. I do not ask you to renounce your socialistic principles, I would despise you if you did. But I have a plan which will save you from your enemies and give wider scope to your fearless activities in behalf of democracy.

I shall be at home alone tomorrow, come and take a farewell glass of tea with

Your repentant and devoted

OLGA.

Tearing the letter in fragments Andrei Petrovitch resumed writing.

A moment later, fearing its discovery might compromise the Countess, carefully collecting the scattered bits he threw them in the fire.

Though inured from childhood to a life of poverty Andrei was a confirmed idealist, brimming with love for humanity from the humblest peasant to the Czar.

Yet Olga Pavlovna had turned his heart to hate.

But even now, as he recalled the cadence of her voice his every fibre thrilled with longing.

Unable to concentrate his mind upon writing, Andrei went out for a walk. Though he assured himself he had no intention of responding to Olga's call, habit drew him involuntarily to the Nevsky Prospect.

It was the first mild day of March, a breath of spring filled the air. Farther south, in his beloved Ukraine, thought Andrei, the ice had already melted and the Dnieper, bursting from its long wintry imprisonment was flowing in full flood. Boughs were a-blur with burgeoning blossoms. Why linger in cold, dreary Petrograd when summer smiled in the South-land?

It was Sunday, devout worshippers were returning from morning service. Pleasure-seekers already thronged the Cafés, among whom Andrei noted comrade revolutionists.

A white-haired woman beckoned from an arch-way, then stealthily thrust into his hand a copy of *The Light*.

On the front page in glaring red head-lines Andrei read:

"No more words—Bombs!"

An urgent exhortation to the populace to rally at the Winter Palace and depose their tyrants followed.

Andrei started. He had advocated only a bloodless revolution. This was anarchy! This then was the article which Olga imagined he had written! His reflections were suddenly broken by a troika which gal-

loped furiously down the avenue and drew up before the Imperial Palace. A light flashed in his mind. Someone should warn the Czar! Running to the troika, he presented the paper to the *kutcher*.¹

"Beg the Czar in the name of safety not to drive to-day!"

"Is this a threat?" demanded the *kutcher* paling suddenly.

"Only a warning," shrugged Andrei and turned away.

Along the Fontanka Canal Andrei hurried till he reached the palace of Count Ravaloff. Admitted by the *dvornik* he climbed the stair.

The Countess greeted him eagerly, "Andreiusha," she said reproachfully, "I began to fear you would not come!"

"How could you doubt?" he questioned clasping her tenderly.

She broke into a storm of sobs. "Life with Pavel is intolerable," she flashed, "I will no longer bear it."

"Think well, Dear, what this may mean!" he counselled gravely.

She clasped his neck, "Will you not understand, Andrei, I love you desperately. There is only one way out. Take me with you!"

"I have always loved you," he faltered, "even when you killed my faith, even now when every instinct of honour bids me refuse your sacrifice."

¹ *Kutcher*, coachman.

"Then you fail me!" she moaned, her frame shaken with sobs.

Andrei knelt beside her, face haggard and breath coming fast. "I will not fail you—I shall kill him!" he said unsteadily.

"What a hot-headed anarchist!" she laughed. "You could not kill a rat! No, Andrei, we will go to Switzerland, where you can continue your writing."

"But if we take Vanya, the Count will track us and recover him," he protested vainly.

"I shall not take the boy. He is all Pavel, a little monster. Look, Andreiusha, I have secured passports. I have even transferred my account to a Paris house. We will go this very night!"

A sudden concussion shattered the glass in the windows.

Olga ran to the balcony. Andrei grasped her arm, "Come back!" he commanded as a second bomb exploded below with a deafening report.

"My warning came too late," thought Andrei, "the Czar has been assassinated!"¹

At that instant a wounded moujik climbed the balcony and leaping through the shattered window, fell at the feet of the Countess.

"The *Gorodovoi*,"² he cried, "save me from the *Gorodovoi*!"

¹ Alexander II assassinated March 13, 1881.

² *Gorodovoi*, the police.

Signing to him to follow, Olga led the way to a rear entrance.

A violent rapping assailed the door. "Open!" cried a voice, "in the name of the Czar!"

Andrei threw the door wide and the Gorodovoi entered.

"You are our prisoner!" growled their leader. "You were seen to enter this room. I arrest you as the assassin of the Czar! Come quietly, it will be useless to resist!"

Fearing to incriminate herself the Countess uttered no word of protest.

Andrei with head erect silently followed his captors.

II

BURIED ALIVE

Wherein is shown that walls have lips as well as ears.

Although Andrei had not appealed to the Countess at the moment of his arrest, he had grounds for hope in her ability to save him, since Count Ravaloff held the post of Commissioner of Police.

"She will tell her husband," thought Andrei, "of the wounded moujik and establish my alibi. At the preliminary investigation she will surely effect my release. I can rely on her woman's wit, I can trust her love."

But to Andrei's consternation the Count bore witness that his wife was suffering from nervous shock, and that

it would be impossible for her to attend the examination. He presented Olga Pavlovna's sworn statement that the prisoner, a man she had never before seen, had broken into the apartment menacing her with violence should she refuse him refuge.

On this testimony, Andrei was held as an accomplice of the murderer and imprisoned in the fortress. For months he waited notice of his trial, but none came.

Meanwhile the assassin was executed and Andrei forgotten, though rumour was rife that he had fled. Count Ravaloff assured his wife that he had connived at Andrei's escape. That this were true the Countess hoped earnestly, for in her girlhood with all the devotion of which her shallow heart was capable, she had worshipped the youthful idealist.

In those days because of his revolutionary opinions Andrei had been expelled from the University. His career ruined, disheartened and broken he read the inspiring words of a master socialist!¹

"Where shall you go, youths from whom knowledge has been cut off? From the Don and the Ural, from the Volga and the Dnieper comes the answer: 'To the People, Exiles of knowledge, to the Russian People!'"

The torch of Liberty flamed in Andrei's heart. He resolved to seek the people, live their sordid life and share their heavy burden. Then, after laborious toiling

¹ Herzen.

in the University of Life he would go forth and fearlessly proclaim the Truth.

By good fortune the position of physician in a Ukrainian village presented itself and he eagerly grasped the post, seeing his long sought opportunity of experiencing the inner life of "the dark people."

The lately emancipated serfs of Pavlovia were a pitiful peasantry. Their former masters treated them with scarce more consideration than cows and sheep. Vodka and idleness cast a noisome blight over every izba and the shadow of despair lurked like a spectre in each degraded home.

Maudlin cries of mirthless laughter,
Noisome filth on floor and wall,
Cobwebs on the rotting rafter—
Darkness over all!

Spiders in the corners creeping,
Mouldy, black rye-bread;
Moanings, coughings, groaning, weeping,
Hope and courage dead!

But a wretched beggar's death—for
Years of slavery—
Put thy trust in the creator
God will solace thee!

NIKITIN.

Impelled by the example of Andrei, Olga Pavlovna, eldest daughter of the land-owner, devoted herself to philanthropy, comprehending that a show of altruism

would render her irresistible in his eyes. Her air of distinction, enlivened by a restrained audacity, would have been a sufficient lure for most men, but for Andrei she realized she must appear to possess a soul.

Olga accordingly assumed the rôle of Lady Bountiful, bringing delicacies to the sick, clothing to the needy and sweets to the children.

Borrowing Andrei's socialistic pamphlets, she yawned over them in secret, reading barely enough to enable her to question him superficially, but listening with an expression of rapt sympathy to the eloquent words of the young enthusiast.

Love surprised Andrei unawares, the first full flood of a pure youthful passion. If the love of Olga was less naïve, it was not less genuine.

She demanded that their engagement be kept secret. It would be impossible, she declared, to obtain her father's consent till Andrei should earn a larger income.

Abandoning his charges, he went to Petrograd and obtained the post of assistant to a prominent physician. It was a step upward and a livelihood.

One morning, like thunder out of a clear sky, came the news that Olga had married Count Pavel Ivanovitch Ravaloff. The world for Andrei suddenly turned red. This, he reflected bitterly, was his reward.

From that day he plunged into the weltering sea of socialism. Four years passed during which there poured

from his brain a series of articles in *The Light*, which electrified Russia and fired the mine of revolution.

And now through her perfidy he was buried alive in this dismal fortress where so many innocent victims had perished through insanity and suicide.

It was not the ceaseless confinement, the fetters eating into his flesh, that was hardest to bear, but the unremitting isolation. No comradeship had he of any kind, for the keepers were not allowed to speak to him and he was permitted neither books nor paper on which to express his thoughts.

Every half hour suspicious eyes peered at him through a "Judas" in the door. When, to keep from sinking into imbecility, Andrei sang to himself, a gruff-voiced warden bade him hold his damned tongue. The light filtered dimly through a narrow embrasure. There was no means of communicating with any fellow prisoner!

When melancholy had grown to blank despair, at regularly spaced intervals, came a reiterated tapping, monotonous, purposeful, insistent.

Andrei had heard of the "knock alphabet," by which convicts in neighbouring cells were accustomed to communicate with each other, and he suddenly realized that a fellow prisoner was striving to speak to him. He replied with some random raps; then, his comrade in misfortune resumed the patient attempts to make him understand. The raps recurred in groups. Listening

intently at length Andrei perceived that they corresponded in number to letters of the alphabet.

Presently there came a reiterated knocking:

21—14—4—5—18—19—20—1—14—4
u n d e r s t a n d

Whereupon Andrei exultantly signaled:

25—5—19
y e s

His lesson was learned. His unknown instructor gradually taught him a swifter mode of signalling by means of a checker-board square.¹

He learned that she was Marfa Mikailovna Kirilov, a Nihilist, and he told her his whole sad story.

"You display more indignation for the woman who betrayed you than sympathy for the wrongs of our people!" she telephoned.

Andrei rapped back that although Olga had ruined his career, he was thankful, since he could now give himself wholly to the Cause. "If I ever escape from this living hell," he vowed, "she shall suffer the torment she deserves."

"Do not lose hope," knocked Marfa, "many of our comrades have outwitted their jailers," and she recounted tales of daring deliverance.

¹ For a more complete exposition of the "Knock Alphabet" see George Kennan, *A Russian Comedy of Errors*, p. 185.

One day Marfa signaled the joyous tidings that she had been pardoned and would soon be free.

"I shall work for you, Andrei Petrovich," she promised. "Comrades of *The Light* will supply money. We will be glad if you will become our Editor-in-Chief. We still print the paper surreptitiously, despite the Gorodovoi, who cannot discover our hiding place.

"Listen, I have a plan. Feign illness so that each day you will be allowed to exercise for half an hour in the courtyard. I will bribe the sentry to give you cigarettes, on which will be written directions."

"But they will be examined," knocked Andrei, in protest.

"The writing will be invisible. Only after heating the paper over your lamp will the characters appear. However, we will not trust all our messages to the cigarettes. A Sister of Charity distributes testaments. She will bring you a marked copy, with pin pricks under the letters forming the message.

"Till then, Brother, farewell. Keep up thine heart for the day of deliverance is near!"

III

A DARING DELIVERANCE

All went well. Andrei received the cigarettes and from their numbered wrappers, rendered legible by the heat of the lamp, read:

“Your escape is planned for tomorrow. While you are exercising in the courtyard, before the turnkey comes to take you back to your cell, listen! If you hear a balalaika from a barge on the Neva you may know that all is in readiness.

“Reenter the prison immediately. Go down the corridor to the stairway closed by a grille. You will find it unlocked! Descend and pass through the subterranean passage to a wine-cellar beneath the Governor’s residence and there await developments!”

Obsessed by vague foreboding Andrei waited. Next morning during his recess a distant tinkling caught his ear. Rhythmical and clear came the bell-like tones of a balalaika.

He peered furtively across the court. All was well. No one was in sight, save a drunken guard dozing in his sentry-box. Crossing the court Andrei reentered the prison. Descending the tortuous stairway, he crept through the underground passage to the wine-cellar. A narrow *meutrière* commanded the outer court, the Neva bridge and the fortress gate.

A moment later the gate opened and the Police Commissioner’s coach clattered over the bridge and drew up at the door of the Governor’s residence. On the box rigid and imperturbable sat a gold-broidered kutcher.

Hard by a ragged-caftaned moujik was innocently engaged in hosing down the cobble-stones. Raising the

nozzle, he suddenly directed a stream at the coachman, knocking off his hat.

With an oath the enraged kutcher leaped from the box and made for the moujik.

Running for dear life, the peasant distanced his pursuer and plunged down a bulkhead into the wine-cellar. The kutcher followed. As his head appeared within the archway, the moujik struck him with a bottle and he crumpled and fell. Divesting him of his gold-broidered great-coat Andrei and the moujik gagged and bound their prisoner.

Throwing off his ragged caftan the moujik revealed a fur coat and astrakan cap, which he gave to Andrei.

Andrei stared in astonishment, the moujik was a woman!

"I am Marfa Mikailovna," she smiled, hastily donning the kutcher's coat. "Quick, climb the stairs, go out the front door and enter the coach as if you were the Commissioner!"

Andrei did as bidden, while Marfa, in coachman's hat, mounted the box. With a clink of harness the coach approached the bridge. The Commissioner of Police was a frequent caller upon the Governor. The sentry knew the coachman well, so, despite her false whiskers, Marfa ran great danger of detection. But as the guard threw open the gate an orange-girl (a comrade in disguise) attempting to enter, distracted his attention.

"Stop!" he called, "you can't come in here!"

"Not if I pay toll," bandied the girl, giving him a rousing kiss.

"Baggage!" cried the sentry, "you can't trick me," and pushing her roughly back he closed the gate, while during this *divertissement* the carriage rattled safely across the bridge.

Driving to the shop of a *parikmaker*¹ Andrei was first divested of his beard, then, doubling on their track, Marfa drove to the factory behind the Law Courts where was hidden the printing-press of *The Light*.

"Thank you, Kutcher, that will be all," said Andrei as he alighted. Marfa saluted formally: "Very good sir," she replied, then whispered: "Beware, you are watched!" and with a fillip of the whip drove off.

IV

A DOUBLE REVENGE

Again Andrei was free, if a life of secret hiding with the unremitting fear of re-arrest can be termed freedom. Each day he poured out his inmost heart in stirring diatribes for *The Light*. Not his personal grievances, but the wrongs of the peasants, the Dark People of Russia.

Moved by Turgenev's *Tales of a Huntsman* the Czar had emancipated the serfs, but regretting his hastiness had permitted reactionary bureaucrats to neutralize his

¹ Parikmaker, barber.

magnanimity. The lot of the moujik was even worse than before enfranchisement. There remained but one remedy—Democracy. For this Andrei battled unremittingly, printing his forbidden pamphlets on a hand-press hidden in a piano-box and signing them with the pseudonym Narodin—Friend of the People.

He slept upon a pile of shavings in the adjoining carpenter's shop. A comrade brought food daily and took the papers to his brotherhood throughout the city. In vain the Gorodovoi searched for the birth-place of *The Light*, and its unknown Father. Andrei never quitted the building save to attend the midnight meetings of The Cause.

Spring had come again. An overmastering longing for the tranquil steppe-land obsessed Andrei's heart. It was there in his loved Ukraine in this wondrous season that he had first known love.

A fierce passion surged within his veins. The illusions of youth had fled, leaving only hatred. Pushkin, that Russian Shakespeare, who knew all hearts, thus voiced his awakening:

When Cometh Love

When love's mysterious flower of bliss and pain
In youth's bewildered heart doth gently spring,
Such glad refreshment it doth sudden bring
As when o'er arid lands and parchèd plain
Heaven sheds her welcome flood of cooling rain.
Lifted from sordid earth to fairer flower

The spirit soars the sky on elfin wing
To seek its lost celestial home again.

But when in older hearts with fevered breath
And sudden flood love's restless torrent flows,
It leaves behind such trace of bitter death
As winter wind whose lean, relentless hand
Lays low the flowery mead with ruthless blows
And turns to barren waste the gladsome land.

One dominant thought obsessed Andrei. Revenge! Fate placed in his hands the means. Between the slices of bread in his lunch he discovered a paper, on which was scrawled these words:

"At the fountain in the Summer Garden, today, noon!"

Andrei took portfolio and clerk's gown from the cloak room of the Law Courts and thus disguised hastened to the park.

Drawing a brief from the portfolio he seated himself on a bench, bent in feigned preoccupation.

By the fountain's rim a curly-headed three-year-old was playing with a kitten. His delicate features and costly raiment proclaimed him a pampered offspring of the nobility.

Andrei eyed the frail patrician face with intense antipathy. His dislike grew as he recognized in the boy's long-lashed eyes a haunting resemblance.

Bending over the child he caressed the curly head: "What is your name?" he questioned.

"Ivan Pavlovitch Ravaloff," lisped the boy, "but Mamenka calls me Vanya."

A pang shot through his heart. "Her son!" he moaned, "who might have been mine! What right had this woman to rob me of my child!"

Then his reflections took another turn. "Does the boy resemble his mother also in character?" he queried to himself.

The child's remonstrances with his nurse brought the answer.

"I don't care if you forbid me to pinch the kitten," he whined. "I love to hear it squeal. I don't care if things go up your spine when I twist its tail. Mamenka always lets me make my toys squeak. That is the most best noise I ever saw a toy do!"

"A kitten is not like your toys, Vanotchka," Andrei remonstrated. "It has feelings, and you hurt them!"

"I don't care," insisted the child, "I want to hurt it, I shall do what I want. Look, I am going to make it swim!"

Grasping the kitten by the nape of its neck he dropped it into the pool. For a moment it floundered, then sank.

Andrei sprang to his feet: "Quick, quick!" he shouted, "it will drown!"

The boy turned white. The next instant he had leaped the coping and plunging to the bottom raised the kitten from its watery grave. Misapprehending his intentions the kitten sank its claws in the boy's arm.

"Devilkin!" he shrieked, dropping and kicking it furiously.

Revolted by his cruelty Andrei shook the child.

A light touch grazed his arm and beneath the nurse's cap he recognized Marfa.

"Like father like son!" frowned Andrei.

"The boy is not bad," protested Marfa, "only impressionable. In another environment he would lose all trace of his heredity."

Andrei's eyes flashed. "My revenge!" he smiled. "I will teach the boy to be an anarchist. He shall break his mother's heart!"

"How will you accomplish this?" she questioned.

"Through you. You shall instill the doctrines of Nihilism in his mind!"

"Useless," she protested. "I would be discovered and discharged. But I will help you. Under privation the heart of the child would turn to hate. I will take him to the Ukraine and teach him the life of the Dark People. Not even a child of a moujik shall suffer more!"

Andrei gave her his purse. "This will furnish you with funds. Take the boy, Marfa. I leave the rest to you."

That afternoon as he returned to the factory Andrei was rearrested! In a travesty of a trial, he was sentenced to twenty-five years' hard labor in the convict mines of Siberia.

"A quarter of a century," he groaned, "all that remains of life, a living death!"

V

LIVING DEATH

Song of the Mines

With pick and spade we ceaseless toil
Our tireless shovels never sleep,
For **not** in vain beneath the soil
His golden hoard God buried deep.

Then falter not, but shovel fast!
With shining eyes serene **we** feel,
When Freedom's goal is won at last,
Our thankful sons will bless our zeal.

Though stream our backs with bloody sweat,
Though spent from toiling ceaselessly,
Our famished bodies chill and wet,
No breath of protest murmur we.

Freezing or sweating what care we?
Hunger and thirst whate'er betide!
Each blow we strike for Liberty,
Each stroke, a stab to tyrant pride!

NEKRASSOV.

Four thousand miles, through rain and snow, over bleak mountain passes and across desolate steppes had Andrei dragged his toilsome way, freezing and sweating by turns, shackled with manacles and leg-fetters, famished and consumed with thirst.

By good fortune he had concealed a few *roubles* in a money-belt, with which he was enabled to purchase tea and biscuits to supplement the noisome fare of the post stations. His hardships had not been worse than the rest, but he suffered terribly from frost-bite and an unremitting pain gnawed in his chest. He was thankful, indeed, when at last the captive train reached the crest of the range.

The wind was terrific and the storm increased to a blizzard. For a day and night they waited, shivering, without shelter, save holes they dug in the snow. The following morning dawned clear, and through the fresh-fallen drifts they resumed their tedious march.

Andrei was shackled to Akmed Ben Adam, a Daghestan brigand. Accustomed to the mild climate of Trans-Caucasia, he contracted pneumonia and sank exhausted by the route. Unlocking his leg-fetters the guard abandoned him to die. Taking him upon his back, Andrei bore the dying Tatar the remaining *versts* to the prison stockade. For this service Akmed rewarded him with a deathless friendship, and the two exiles became inseparable.

With heart well-nigh joyous, Andrei entered the Kamera.¹ Here at last, he would find warmth and shelter! But the first breath which assaulted his nostrils, the never-to-be-forgotten prison stench of teeming, unwashed bodies, so revolted him that he would will-

¹ *Kamera*, prison ward.

ingly have exchanged its noisome warmth for the frosty outer air.

Packed with thirty others in a room whose only furniture was a brick stove and *parasha*,¹ in a bunk alive with vermin and denuded of bedding, without undressing Andrei lay down on the bare planks, in his manacles and leg-fetters.

The only windows, high in the wall, were nailed tight, with no pretence of ventilation. The convicts smoked, cursed and wrangled ceaselessly. At intervals a madman screamed and gibbered. Sleep seemed impossible, for the Tartar shackled at his side, groaned and chattered with fever. Wrapping his sheep-skin about his comrade, Andrei comforted him as best he might, and hugging Akmed for warmth at last found sleep.

Like a common thief or murderer Andrei was condemned to labor in the mines. Every morning, marshalled by armed Cossacks, the convicts filed sullenly to their work. Andrei's task was to break the frozen soil with a heavy pick. The Tartar's part was to shovel the gold-bearing gravel into barrows and roll it to the troughs to be washed.

"These mines," laughed Akmed, "are the Czar's pocket-money. When you think how many thousand roubles we dig every year the 'Little Father' might well spare us a cigarette now and then."

¹ *Parasha*, filth tub.

"Heart of God! he will," thundered the leader of the gang, a burly Cossack from the Kirghiz Steppe.

"What sayest brother?" questioned Akmed, "shall we admit the Barin into our band?"

The Cossack shrugged.

"Listen," smiled Akmed, "I have a plan. When General Kukushka¹ gives the command we shall decamp. Yonder lies Mongolia. Just across the border is a Tartar izba. Thither will we flee, and joining a caravan bound for Manchuria, escape to Vladivostock. What do you say, Andreiushka, will you join us?"

Andrei shook his head, as thought of liberty awakened longing for his beloved Ukraine.

For slowly something called him surely back,
Back to the steppe-land, to the garden shades
Where lime-trees loom in long umbrageous lines
And valley-lilies, white and pure as maids,
And fragile willows o'er the river black
Wave tremblingly their boughs, and withen pines
Lift gaunt and leafless limbs like brandished blades,
Amid the cooling scent of fern-fronds dark.

In velvet meadows verdurous and light,
Where the ripe grain, in rhythmic serried rank,
Sways lazily its heavy, drooping heads,
And over all the golden sunshine sheds
From out a cloudless heaven its radiance bright.²

¹ The convicts call the cuckoo, "General Kukushka." When they hear his first spring note many of them cannot resist the call but run away to the forest.

² Turgenef.

Awakening from his reverie: "How do you purpose to finance your venture?" he asked, "by brigandage?"

"The Czar will provide," laughed Akmed. "Each time I come back from the washers, I hide a handful of gold in my blouse. We have now in cache more than we can carry. The driver knows our secret. In each load of flour he carries is a sack of gold-dust. We will seize his horses by force. The tea-merchants will not be loth to share our booty. If not we have other persuaders!" He drew from his boot a murderous *yataghan*.¹

Andrei signed dissent. "A greater venture waits me here," he said gravely, "a great revolution to rid Russia of her misery. Even for sake of freedom, I cannot abandon my comrades. Your secret is safe with me. Good luck to you, friend Akmed!"

Weeks passed and at length "General Kukushka" was heard calling softly in the silver birches. Daily the exiles' hours grew longer. They were awakened with dawn and at five o'clock were in the mines. But they were only too glad to quit the loathsome Kamera.

That morning an unwonted light glittered in the bandit's eyes as he whispered in Andrei's ear:

"Your 'big thing,' you sure it worth waiting for?"

"Even though I die for it," asserted Andrei.

With a silent hand-clasp Akmed slunk away.

That night, after murdering their guards, the Tartars

¹ *Yataghan*, a crooked Kirghiz knife.

escaped. The following day Andrei was summoned before the gorodovoi.

"Tell us where your comrades went!" he commanded.

Andrei made no answer.

"I know what will make you speak," laughed the warden. "Take him to the prison-court! Give him a hundred blows of the *plet*!"¹

They lashed him mercilessly. Not a word passed Andrei's lips, though he well knew should he confess, the torment would instantly cease. After the hundredth blow, the flesh was stripped from his bleeding back.

Andrei fell unconscious.

Declaring that the prisoner would die, the surgeon stopped the flogging.

They bore him, still unconscious, to the hospital, where for days he lay in delirium. When at last his lacerated back was healed, Andrei's spirit was broken. He cursed himself for not having accepted freedom at the hands of the Tartars. All his dream of "The Cause" seemed but vain illusion.

Vengeance was now the only thing worth living for. But this seemed so unattainable that little by little he forgot revenge and sought oblivion in drink. Each night instead of sleeping he toiled ceaselessly at making shoes and employed the money to purchase vodka. Soon he sank into despair, then to utter degradation. No longer

¹ The *plet*, a heavy cat-o'-nine-tails.

could he hope for the future, no longer did he feel regret for the past.

Rather than endure this living hell, Andrei determined to throw himself down an abandoned shaft, where none might find him.

VI

A LITTLE CHILD SHALL LEAD THEM

Eluding the kranul Andrei sought the shaft, crept to the brink and peered into the black abyss. He fancied he heard a faint knocking. It could not be a miner, he reflected, since for years no work had been done in this gallery.

Again came the tapping clear, monotonous, insistent, like the knocks through the massive walls of Petropavlovsk. Carefully marshalling the letters he read the message:

“W—a—i—t!”

More raps recurred at regular intervals:

“M—a—r—f—a,” he read with delight.

For days he had not thought of her. He imagined her dead and sending him this message from the great beyond, when a sudden shout rang out:

“Andrei Petrovitch!” called the guard.

Groping his way to the hoist Andrei hauled himself slowly to the light of day. A sentry pressed a letter into

his hand. With trembling fingers he broke the seal, and read:

"The prisoner, Andrei Petrovitch Kovalevsky is hereby informed that his sister and child have been permitted to share his exile. They will be stationed at Kara, Lower Diggings, where said prisoner may visit them weekly under surveillance."

ZAVÉDUYUSCHI.¹

Andrei gasped in bewilderment. He had no sister! "Make haste," grunted the guard, "the train is due."

Andrei hurried to the station, arriving as the train pulled in. At a barred window, holding up the little boy that he might feed some hungry pigeons stood Marfa.

On sight of Andrei she smiled wistfully at his sadly altered face. They embraced through the meshes of the grille.

"*The Light* has commissioned you to write the story of your exile. I am come to assist you with the work, I have brought Vanya that he may comfort your hardship. He is such a little dear. See, he has just deprived himself of his dinner to feed these pigeons!"

"Mamenka, give me a pigeon," pleaded Vanya, clasping her neck.

"Batioushka will give you one," she answered, buttoning his coat.

¹ Zavéduyuschi, Governor of the Penal Establishment.



"At a barred window, holding up the little boy that he
might feed some hungry pigeons, sat Tanya."

Yaroshenko. N. A.

Reproduced from *The Russian Arts*, permission Rosa Newmarch
and Herbert Jenkins, Ltd., London

A sudden joy in his eyes Andrei took the child from her arms.

After long search they found shelter in a dairyman's *dascha*, in the outskirts. The moujik's wife, a mother of ten, insisted that one more would make no difference. Since it was still summer, Vanya could sleep in the barn upon the hay. Marfa smilingly assented. Andrei gave up vodka, hoarding all his humble earnings for the little family. Marfa and the boy were always at the gate waving to him as he went and came. Bread and milk in plenty soon reddened Vanya's pallid cheeks. He told with delight how he had visited the church and had seen among the icons the Christ-Child in the manger.

"Just like mine," he boasted, "with a moo-cow and donkey like Long-ears!"

Winter came and Marfa knitted stockings for the children. "Vanya should have warmer clothing!" she insisted.

Andrei set snares in the cabbage-field: "When we trap a hare," he chuckled, "Vanya shall have a fur cap, and perhaps after a time, a *shuba*."¹

At his next coming Marfa explained that Vanya after seeing the first dead hare had liberated the others.

"Did the Bunny want to be killed?" he asked.

"Bunnies are bad," Andrei equivocated, "they steal the cabbages. Bad people who steal the food of the poor must be killed."

¹ *Shuba*, fur pelisse.

"No," contradicted Vanya, "they must be made to be good. I made the bunnies promise not to steal any more and they didn't."

"Well, the bunnies promised to bring you a shuba," laughed Andrei, surreptitiously giving Marfa money to purchase a pelisse.

Months passed, Andrei's sentence had been commuted because of good conduct. No longer was he a prisoner in the stockade but a member of the "Free Command," a ticket of leave man, permitted, under strict surveillance, to live in the village and support his family by shoemaking. He was allowed to carry a rifle and hunt in the forest. He might even have fled but affection held him with fetters stronger than steel.

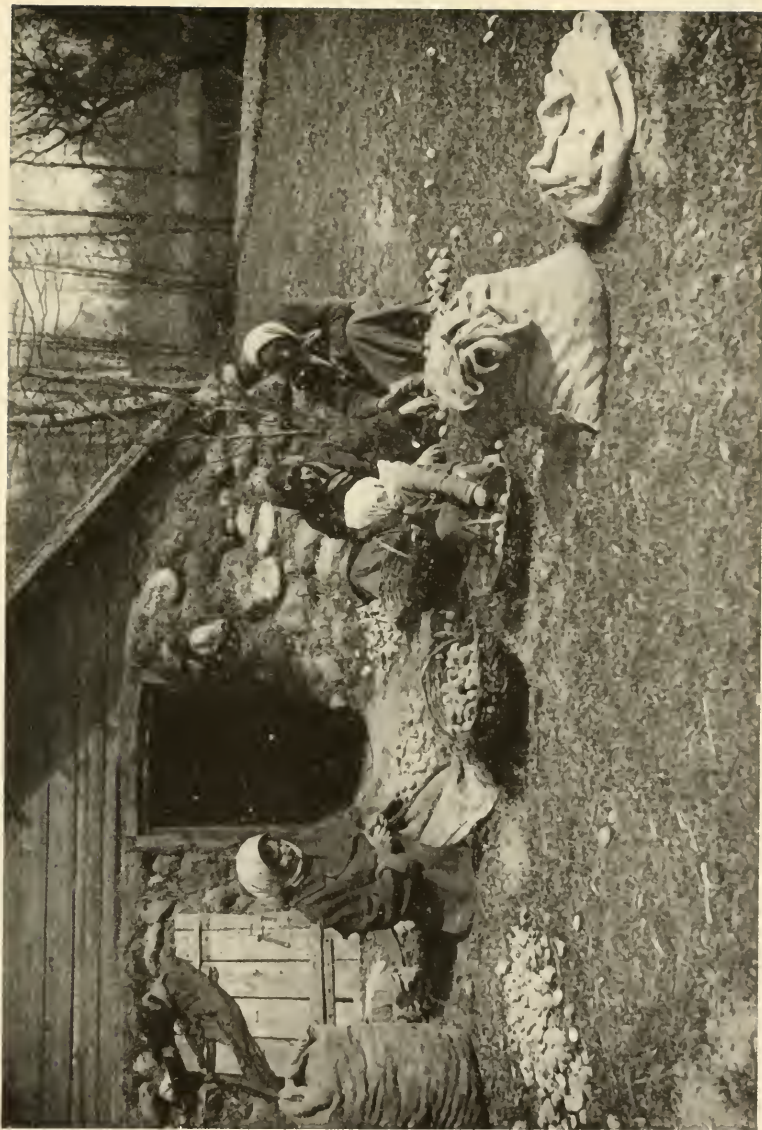
Love for the child had unconsciously softened his heart. He taught Vanya to love all God's creatures.

Years went by and the boy shot up into a handsome lad bearing a strong resemblance to his mother. Noting the droop of his curling lashes Andrei winced.

"Tell me of Olga," he asked. It was the first time he had mentioned her name.

Marfa gave a start. Olga's ingratitude, she reflected, had fired his love, while her own unselfish devotion left him cold. Jealousy gripped her heart.

"I hoped you would ask," she replied resolutely. "Without her assistance you might still be imprisoned in Petropavlovsk. It was all the plan of the Countess,



With the Moujiks

Permission Keystone View Company, Inc., of New York. Press Illustrating Service

I merely served as her agent. It was she who sent the coach to the fortress after bribing the kutchler. Her punishment at the hands of her husband when the coachman confessed you can scarcely realize!"

"But she allowed me to be sent to exile when a word would have proved my innocence," protested Andrei.

"She had left home before your second trial. Pretending that his wife had eloped with a lover, the Count gained his divorce. I stayed on hoping daily for news of the Countess but none came. When he installed his mistress, I took Vanya and came to you."

Andrei paced the room in agony.

"Believe me, Andreiusha, I did not intend to shatter your ideal. She surely loved you once."

"You have not shattered my faith," he asserted. "One woman I still know who is unselfish and true."

"Is there some one," asked Marfa, "to whom I may take a message?"

Andrei smiled bitterly, "Do you remember Lermontov's poem?" he questioned, then repeated:

"The moments left to me, dear friend,
They say are all too brief and few;
But, ere it come—the ruthless end—
I want a word with you.

"When you go home to them on leave,
Then say—But No! There scarce can be
A single soul to really grieve,
Who cares to hear from me.

"And yet, if some one should request
To learn how Death o'ertook me here;
Tell her—a bullet in the breast,
Upon my lips a cheer!

"And say I died for Liberty,
Clasping your hand the while,
And closed my lids with blissful smile
Dreaming of home and *thee*!

"My Father and my Mother too
May both be long-syne gone;
But if they live, it would not do
To tell the truth alone.

"Tell them I always was, you see,
A wretched writer and explain:
They've sent us to the mines again,
And not to wait for me.

"I had a sweetheart once, you know,
How long ago it seems!
And she and I—How long ago!
Were plighted in our dreams.

"Tell her the truth, nor vainly try
Her faithless heart to spare;
But tell her all—she will not cry,
She does not really care!"

VII

THE PEACE THAT PASSETH UNDERSTANDING

Old Andrei, all the livelong day,
Sits in his chair.
His hair is white, his beard is grey
With ceaseless care.

His brow is lined, his sight is dim
His day is done.
Death soon will take away from him
His only son.

All day he plaits with fingers slow
Rude boots of birch—
His one great joy at night to go
To God's good church!

Within the gloom he reverent stands,
Mumbling a prayer,
And thanks the Lord with folded hands
For all his care.

His needs are few, his sorrows great,
His joy is whole.
He blesses Heaven for his hard fate,
Brave, deathless Soul!

NIKITIN.

Andrei crouched over the fading embers reading a letter from his son.

A quarter of a century in Siberia had bowed his shoulders and silvered his hair. Marfa had returned leaving a void that nothing could fill. Only the child saved him from losing his reason, heartened the exile to endure and turned bitter to sweet. Like Tolstoi Andrei found refuge in religion and devoted his life to bringing light to the dark people by "a force mightier than violence, more powerful than hate."

Realizing that his instruction was insufficient, he sent his adopted son to St. Petersburg to enter the University.

From time to time Vanya wrote, but his letters were censored and not seldom withheld. Deprived of his son's companionship, Andrei sank into melancholy. The years of sordid toil had undermined strength and courage.

If he could but have his boy again Andrei believed he would be content.

Vanya had chosen his foster-father's profession. Graduating first in his class, he had been appointed physician in a hospital for the insane.

"I have a patient," he wrote, "who had fallen into a lethargy from which, until I came, no one could rouse her. This morning I felt her pulse.

"'Who are you?' she asked, trembling violently. When I told her my name, 'Kovalevsky!' she gasped, 'Are you the son of Andrei Petrovitch?'

"I nodded assent.

"'Is your father still living?' she questioned anxiously.

"Yes, if exile in Siberia through a woman's treachery may be called life."

"A smothered moan, then my patient relapsed into unconsciousness.

"Years since, her husband falsely charging her with infidelity, caused her to be imprisoned in this hospital. I shall probe the case and seek to gain her release, but it will be most difficult as her husband is a *Tchinovnik*.¹

¹ *Tchinovnik*, bureaucrat.

"Strangest of all, she is under the delusion she is the one who sent you to exile. I will ask her to write her name if she has the strength."

Beneath was scrawled in trembling characters:

"Andreiusha forgive
OLGA."

Andrei's head sank upon his breast. "Forgive!" how could she think that possible? One word from her would have spared him this living death, yet she had remained silent.

All night Andrei battled vainly to find forgiveness for the woman who had wronged him. At last he fell asleep and dreamed of Vanya.

Hearing his father moan, the child called:

"Batioushka, have you a pain in your tummy?"

"No, my son, in my heart," was Andrei's answer.

"Never mind. I will kiss it and make it well."

With the touch of the child's lips, Andrei's pain passed and when dawn lighted his squalid chamber he had won the victory.

Enclosing in a letter this verse he inscribed it "To Olga":

Forgiveness

O stainless flower of passion's ruthless flame,
Blooming alone 'mid life's malignities
The piteous prey of calumny and lies,
Lift thou thine head and fear not mortal blame,

Heed not man's scorn and cold hypocrisies,
Nor vainly weep, but dry thy tear-dimmed eyes,
Nor soil thy guileless soul with thought of shame!

Not I thy judge, who thus hath signed thy doom,
Will naught thy grief assuage but Death's dark tomb?
Feed not the flame and all remorse will flee
And love alone remain all free from guile;
Still holy be to those who cherish thee
And thou shalt love the more and, joyous, smile!

POLONSKY.

Days dragged into weeks and months. Years passed and still no answer.

"Perhaps," thought Andrei, "she never received my letter. Or perhaps Olga no longer lived."

One day, when it seemed to the exile that his end was near, a light hand was laid upon his shoulder.

"Come Batioushka—leave your work! I bring the Governor's permission for a *prazdnik*!"¹

Stumbling to his feet, "Vanya!" he cried, "God is good! A holiday in honour of your coming! I never thought I would know such happiness!"

"I bring you greater joy, little Father. All your hopes are now fulfilled!"

Andrei caught his arm: "Liberty?" he gasped, "Liberty for Russia?"

"Yes, Father, the Czar has granted all our demands. Listen to his promise in the Imperial Ukase:

¹ *Prazdnik*, holiday.

“ ‘We hereby grant to the people liberty, freedom of conscience and speech.’ ”

“Russia is free at last!” smiled Andrei exultantly.

“Son of my heart,” he smiled, “blessed are mine eyes that have seen the dawn, thrice blessed thy feet, which shall walk in the perfect Day.”

Trembling he fell upon his knees:

“Almighty God,” he prayed, “‘now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace,’ for I have beheld our nation’s deliverance!”

Tears welled in Vanya’s eyes, and silence filled the *khata*.

“Listen, Father, I have still better news! This paper signed by the Czar sets you at liberty and restores you to the rights of citizenship!”

With tear-dimmed eyes Andrei read the reversal of the verdict.

“How did I obtain this?” he questioned dazedly.

“Through the Countess,” explained Vanya. “I gained her release from the hospital, the Count met death and she now is free. It was she who brought your articles to the attention of the Czar.”

“Olga, Olga,” murmured Andrei. “If only I might beg your forgiveness!”

Of a sudden the exile rose, his arms extended, then sank tottering as Olga Pavlovna laid his head tenderly upon her shoulder.

“Listen, Andreiusha—when I told my husband I

would testify in your behalf, he drugged and imprisoned me in the hospital. One day he told me you had been executed. Then I believe I did go mad for everything grew dim till your forgiveness saved my reason."

"Poor child," whispered Andrei, stroking her hair. "You have suffered even more than I."

"Your sufferings now are over," smiled Vanya. "If only we could find her son her happiness would be complete."

An aura seemed to light Andrei's face—"I can make you happy!" he cried. Then with a moan his head sank in his hands.

Her arm was about him. "My son?" she questioned breathlessly.

Andrei struggled in futile effort to remember.

"Your son?" he faltered. "*Jesue Christe!* I have forgotten!"

They had hoped to take him back to his loved Ukraine, but Andrei refused to go.

Bowed, broken but uncomplaining, a pathetic figure he dragged himself about the izba, searching in vain for one whose name he could not recall.

"Is it Olga?" asked the Countess. "Surely you must remember me!"

"Ay," nodded the exile, "I recall her well, youthful and beautiful, not like you!"

Tears dimmed her eyes, as she realized the full measure of her punishment.

"You have forgotten your name," he smiled. "Perhaps, it is as well. There is much it is best to forget!"

Every night Andrei knelt in the golden gloom of the little church, mumbling the same litany.

"Good Lord Christ, restore my memory that I may give back her son!"

One night, after the service, they found him motionless and white at the foot of the altar. The Countess bent over him, chafing the bloodless palms.

"Olga!" he murmured, "I give you back your son."

"Father?" cried Vanya, clasping him to his breast.

"Yes, Vanyotchka," smiled Andrei, upon his lips the peace that passeth understanding.

CHAPTER X

THE RED TERROR

I

Bolshevocky

'Twas Dantzig and the Czecho-sloves
Did Pskov and slaver in the wabe.
All Przasnysz were the Zaparoves
And the Red rats outscrabe.

Beware the Bolshevock, my son!
The jaws that jaw, the palms that itch!
Beware the Trotsky-bird and shun
The odorous Ivanovitch!

He took his vodka blade in hand
Long time the Slavic foe he sought,
Rasputined by the Duma tree
And samovared in thought.

And as in Kiefish thought he stood
The Bolshevock with nose of flame
Came Novgorodding through the wood
And Cossacked as it came.

One two! One two! And through and through
The vodka blade went Vladvostack.
He left it dead and with its head
Went Muscoviting back.

"And hast thou slew the Bolshevock?
Come to my arms my Nevsky boy!

Oh! scabrous day, Skidooh! Skiday!"
He Moscowed in his joy.

'Twas Dantzig and the Czecho-sloves
Did Pskov and slaver in the wabe
All Przasnysz were the Zaparoves,
And the Red rats out-scrabe.

(With apologies to Lewis Carroll).

THIS outrageous parody rang in my ears as I listened to the tinkling balalaikas and sipped my "small black" with vodka in the "Little Russian" restaurant.

It was before the day that Bolshevism became a real menace and we were all a little inclined to scoff at America's danger. Soon, however, I was destined to discover that its insidious doctrine was no mere bogey. But to the crux of my story!

That corner of New York east of the Bowery known as "Little Russia," has always been in unsavoury odour; so it was my own fault that I, Dave Stevenson, got into trouble that evening.

Having a drop of the Bohemian in my blood I enjoyed rambling in the underworld, whose picturesque types appealed to me. I was a good mixer with all sorts and conditions of men. Adventure I loved, but when spiced with danger found its call the more compelling.

As European representative of the firm of McCarvester & Co., exporters of agricultural machinery, I possessed a smattering of several foreign languages, which I enjoyed practising under the slightest pretext.

Yegor, waiter at the Russian restaurant, camouflaged behind cobwebbed tuns of a wine-cellar, I think liked me well. Yet that night Yegor unwittingly did me an ill turn when he warned some customers in a private booth to be careful as the guy at the next table understood Russian.

Yegor's loyalty was divided.

With the same ostentatious flick of his dirty napkin he had dusted our chairs. With the same unctuous smile he had confided that the caviare tonight was delicious—he kissed the tips of his fingers, and once tasted was never to be forgotten, with which statement I was compelled to agree.

In return for a tip, Yegor told me that the burly German, who had rolled up in a princely limousine, had brought with him the editor of a radical journal, one Isidor Malakoff, a loud-mouthed fanatic, whose incendiary propaganda had aroused the enmity of the government.

Thus it was "in the interest of public safety," that Yegor had suggested that his patrons converse in a lower tone.

The German lifted the dingy curtain, eyed me stealthily, then tiptoed back to his seat.

"Verdamnter Yankee!" he cursed. "All the day has he shadowed me, at the bank, at the ticket-office, and now here, the dirty stool-pigeon!"

His interlocutor stifled an oath, and for the remainder

of the meal their conversation became almost inaudible. However, from time to time I gathered elusive fragments.

The German aired his views that the Bolsheviki were conferring upon his Vaterland the greatest possible favor. In fact they were ruining Russia.

"Your radical propaganda plays absolutely into our hands," he laughed. "That explains why my august government honours you with this opportunity of co-operating secretly with us in Russia. Here are your instructions."

There was a crackle of paper then a brief silence.

"I will meet your proposal with equal frankness," returned the other. "I am a Jew. I hate Russia even more than you, and for good cause. All my nearest were slain in a *pogrom*.¹ I will stop at nothing for the sake of vengeance."

At this point Yegor had counselled circumspection, and my hidden conspirators suddenly ceased speaking. Though I waited half an hour, smoking execrable Russian cigarettes and drinking worse vodka, I heard no more.

It chanced that morning by a strange coincidence, that I was arranging with the cashier of my bank for a letter of credit, as urgent business called me to Russia, when the German left the window.

"That's queer," observed the cashier, "400,000

¹ *Pogrom*, massacre of the Jews.

roubles to be deposited in the Imperial Bank of Russia to the credit of Isidor Semyonovitch Malakoff—a draft from a bank in Berlin!”

I had double evidence that the scoundrel was in the pay of Germany but for what service? The answer was before me.

On the floor, projecting from the curtain which divided our booths, was a folded paper—Malakoff's instructions. Stealthily I slipped it into my pocket.

After paying my check, I quitted the restaurant and walked across the square, pausing in the shelter of a doorway to light a cigar. In the stillness I heard a girl calling the Night Extra and whistled to her.

Suddenly a knife flashed, a pain bit my chest and I crumpled in a heap, ruthless hands gripping my throat.

A limousine purred at the curb.

“Help me lift him!” gruffed a voice. “No, that girl is coming. Jump in, quick, put her in the high!”

With a rumble the car rolled off.

I felt a warm trickle beneath my clothing.

“Here's yer piper,” whined the girl. “Just my luck, the gent's dead drunk!” Her hand fumbled at my cuff-links.

“Blood!” she screamed. Then a policeman lifted my head. The raucous clang of an ambulance stabbed the silence and all was dark.

When I came to myself I was lying upon an operating-

table. Nothing seemed real even here but unremitting pain and a relentless surgeon, who would not let me die.

II

CHAOS

A Swan, a Pike and Crab one day
Combined together all
And harnessed to a cart, they say,
Essayed a load to haul.

But though they tugged with main and might
The cart within the mire stuck tight.

Up to the sky the Swan did fly,
The Crab did side-ways crawl,
Straight for the Sea the Pike did hie
Which proved of value small.

Now who was most to blame I swear
I really cannot say;
The moral plain—the cart is there,
Embedded to this day!

KRYLOV.

So seemed to me the puerile attempts of the revolutionists to pull the political wagon from the mire after the fall of the Romanoffs.

A year had passed since my adventure in "Little Russia" before I was able to carry out my plans and sail to Great Russia in the summer of 1917. Meanwhile my firm's affairs had gone from bad to worse. On my arrival in Petrograd I found our agents had ab-

sconded, abandoning our valuable agricultural machinery, which it was my task to salvage. Financial conditions were badly muddled, and though Kerensky was waging a brave battle for a representative democracy, the outlook, both commercial and political, was dark.

The country was in the throes of disorganization succeeding the abdication of the Czar. The Provisional Government fought with flagging energy the disastrous fight with Germany, but no one as yet foresaw how soon would come the treacherous treaty of Brest-Litovsk and the terror of Bolshevik misrule.

Had I suspected what insurmountable obstacles would soon confront me I would have abandoned my plan. But to the hope of recouping my shattered fortune was added a secret desire to bring my would-be assassin to justice. Of Malakoff's connivance with Germany I held proof, to suppress which he had thought it of sufficient importance to attempt my murder. Hoping that the Russian government would repudiate his action I determined to set before it my evidence.

But something happened of far more moment than the petty revenge I had contemplated, something which gave to my presence in Russia a new meaning, namely my meeting with Sonia Ivanovna Spiridineff whose unremitting devotion to her hapless country was an unceasing inspiration to me in these troublous times.

To learn the administrators of public affairs, I fre-

quented the sessions of the Duma. After long waiting I caught one day the name of Isidor Semyonovitch Malakoff!

Inquiring of a Chinovnik I learned he was the master-spirit in the party which demand most—the Bolsheviki; but it was some time before I was able to identify him beyond question as my would-be assassin.

Returning to my hotel late one night, I sensed that I was being followed. Footsteps in rhythm with mine sounded stealthily behind me. Turning suddenly I confronted a red-bearded rascal who eyed me with impudent amusement.

“I am not mistaken in supposing that I address *Gospodin Stephanovitch*,” he grinned unpleasantly.

Acknowledging the translation of my name I bowed stiffly.

Thrusting back his sable shuba, he displayed the badge of the secret police.

“I am sorry, Barin, but I must trouble you to accompany me to the Winter Palace,” he observed deprecatingly.

“On what charge?” I demanded indignantly.

“You will be informed in due time,” he grunted, slipping hand-cuffs on my wrists.

Taking my arrest philosophically, reflecting that there must be some mistake, I consoled myself with the hope that it would soon be rectified.

At the Winter Palace, however, I noticed certain

signs that were far from reassuring. Gun-batteries were drawn up on all sides of the square and artillery-men were standing at "attention." At the foot of the Alexander column a battalion of cadets had built a fire and were making tea, remaining at their posts for luncheon. Rifle on shoulder sentries of the Woman's Battalion of Death patrolled the corridors of the Palace.

A girl soldier, with frail features but weather-bronzed face, saluted my companion and escorted us to an ante-room.

After a moment we were admitted to the Council-Chamber, though it was evident that our coming was an unwelcome interruption.

Surrounded by his cabinet, pale, haggard and broken, sat the "man of the hour," Kerensky, bowed over a pile of papers by the weight of an intolerable burden.

"Mr. Stevenson," he greeted, "I have not had leisure to verify your communication in regard to Isidor Semyonovitch Malakoff. But in the meantime, he has lodged a grave accusation in which he charges you with being a spy, in the pay of the United States. Affairs of national importance claim my immediate attention, wherefore I must require that you remain in custody till your case is adjusted."

So my enemy had forestalled me! Despite my vain protests of innocence the Guards led me out and locked me in a basement cell. Through its barred windows I looked out upon the square. A girl-soldier halted be-

fore my window and while still maintaining her attitude of kranul spoke, low but audibly.

"That gorodovoi is a spy; we call him 'The Rat.' When I am relieved I will take your friends any message you care to send."

Scribbling a note on a leaf from my memorandum book, I asked her to take it to the American Ambassador.

"Call for Sonia Spiridineff," she volunteered, "if you ever need me!"

"You were one of Botchkareva's girls," I recall, "who took the German trenches! I saw your name mentioned in the dispatches."

A shadow crossed her face and, shouldering rifle, she marched away.

"Could it be possible, " I mused, "that this fragile girl could have stemmed that rout of panic-crazed soldiers and have driven them back at the point of the bayonet?" Then I cursed myself for recalling to her that painful memory.

All that day and the next I remained a prisoner. "Evidently," I concluded, "they have completely forgotten me."

It was the seventh of November, a date destined to become historic. At sun-rise Sonia passed me some biscuits and a *kobasa*¹ she had hoarded from her rations.

"Have a *papirosa*?"² she laughed, bending down that I might light it from hers.

¹ *Kobasa*, sausage.

² *Papirosa*, cigarette.

"I could not go to the Embassy; I have been on duty all night," she explained. "The end is coming fast. The Constitutionals have lost. Look, here is the Soviet proclamation!"

She thrust a hand-bill through the broken pane:

"To Russian Citizens:

"Control has gone over to the Council of Workmen and Soldiers. We have deposed the Provisional Government, which rose against the People.

"The cause for which we strove: peace, abolition of property, and the Soviet Government is now triumphant. Long live the revolution! For peace, for bread, for land, for the power of the People!

(Signed) The Military Revolutionary Committee."

"And Kerensky?" I questioned.

"We will defend him to the death," she said unflinchingly.

That afternoon the storm broke. Shortly after my meagre midday meal, I was startled by an ominous sound like the rumble of a distant earthquake. Nearer and nearer it came, swelling swiftly to a thunderous roar in which were mingled the crash of rifles and the rattle of machine-guns. I heard yells and oaths. Peering between my bars I saw the Cadets charge, and fall back as they met the onsurging wall of the Reds. Then the Woman's Battalion with fixed bayonets rushed forward.

Suddenly a terrific concussion shook the building to

its foundations. They were shelling the palace from a cruiser on the Neva and landing sailors for the attack.

Wrenching at the bars I put forth my utmost effort, but the grille held fast. Then the lock turned and behind the half-open door stood Sonia.

"Quick!" she called, "follow me. The Reds are upon us but you can escape by the private stairway."

"And you?" I questioned. She shook her head.

"The Battalion will hold out till the Chief gets away. Then it will be all up with us," she shrugged, as she ran down the corridor.

Following after I plunged through a doorway out into the square. Here raged a terrific battle. A blood-maddened rabble rushed the entrance.

"Down with the Bourgeoisie! Death to Kerensky!" they shouted as they surged through the archway.

"Fix bayonets!" commanded a boy-lieutenant, "Charge!"

Gallantly the Cadets leaped forward to the attack, but were mowed down like grain by the relentless machine guns. What could a handful of boys avail against this maddened mob? Borne back by the overwhelming flood, the Cadets wavered and broke.

Leaping over the fallen bodies a company of marines jeered at the girls, backs against the wall firing and reloading ceaselessly.

On came the Reds, clubbing and bayonetting the girls on head and breast.

Suddenly Sonia fell, thrust through the shoulder. As the man strove to withdraw his bayonet I sprang upon him clutching his throat with my bare hands.

At that instant a window opened and the Minister of War cried:

“Kerensky has fled. Stop fighting! We surrender!”

With a howl of fury the mob surged into the palace. I looked about for Sonia. Red Cross Girl Stretcher-bearers had carried her to the shelter of a barricade. I hurried to their assistance and began to administer first aid when a company of Reds charged.

“Kick the girls out!” shouted a man in mufti, lifting fist to strike. Then suddenly:

“Sonia!” he leered, “Come with me!”

As he grasped her wounded arm, I landed full upon his jaw. Down he dropped like a stone, but as he fell I recognized the malignant smile of Malakoff.

III

THE QUEST

Carefully bandaging Sonia's bleeding shoulder, I bore her through the fast dispersing mob, no one molesting us or attempting to bar our passage. Soon we were lucky enough to find a drosky and drove to a hospital.

After a perfunctory examination the surgeon stated that the wound was not serious. Sonia would soon recover.



Behind the Barricade the Girls' Red Cross Administered First Aid.

Drawn by F. Matania, September, 1917. Copyrighted by *The Sphere*

Permission given to reproduce from original drawing

Aflame with exaltation I hastened to my hotel. Sonia was mine! I had snatched her from death and no power on earth should take her from me!

Early next morning I inquired for her at the hospital only to learn that she had gone, none knew where.

"Why did you permit her to leave?" I protested.

"A mere scratch!" shrugged the surgeon. "More frightened than hurt. It will rest her nerves to get away from this reign of terror."

"And she left no word for me?" I questioned incredulously.

A search revealed this brief missive:

"With all my great heart I thank the brave Amerikanetz. He is right. Fighting is not a woman's work. I am only a poor, tired girl, who is going home. Farewell,

"SONIA."

So that is all she cares. My manhood surged in sudden revolt. I would find her though I searched from the Baltic to the Urals!

For months I sought for Sonia without avail. The Battalion had been disbanded, its records were lost, nor could I find a comrade who knew whence she came. Month after month dragged by in fruitless search. I neglected my business, ignoring my partner's summons. I forgot even my revenge. Nothing mattered, but the unremitting ache in my heart. At last, I gave up hope and questioned how I could best serve her country.

Hearing of bountiful harvests in the Ukraine and scarcity of machinery, I determined to place my harvesters at the service of the *Zemstvos*.¹

The Voice of the Steppe

In the loud-sounding capital orators thunder
Their ceaselessly weltering torrent of words;
But deep in the heart of the steppes' silent wonder
Not a sound breaks the stillness save only the birds.
The midsummer breeze, like an amorous fairy,
Is kissing the breast of the bountiful earth,
And the myriad leaves of the limitless prairie
Are laughing and dancing in maidenly mirth.

NEKRASOV.

The wind-swept steppe, its bright carpet of April flowers parched by the mid-summer sun, lay a sultry plain of withered grass. The interminable, dusty road stretched monotonously on as though it too were athirst, seeking the great river, fluttering like a silken ribbon in the distant mist.

Between the hills and the Dnieper the road undulated across a gently rolling prairie flashing like beaten gold, the endless wheat-fields of the Ukraine. As far as the eye could reach billowed a sea of golden grain. Ruffled by the wind, the waves eddied about a knoll like breakers round some sunken reef, then surged onward, tirelessly questing their unknown shore.

Far and near men and women toiled waist-deep in

¹ *Zemstvo*, provincial council.



"Billowing waves of golden grain, surged onward, tirelessly questing their unknown shore."

Shishkin

Reproduced by permission from *The Russian Arts*, by Rosa Newmarch. Herbert Jenkins, Ltd., London

the billowing wheat. Sturdy moujiks swung their scythes, bronze-cheeked peasant-maids gathered and bound the golden sheaves.

"Back-breaking toil under that sultry sun," commented Ivan Vasilievitch.

A commanding figure was this old-world agriculturist, a lion-like mane sweeping his shoulders, a silvery beard falling to the girdle of his blouse. Before his searching gaze one felt in the presence of some ancient Hebrew prophet, yet a haunting resemblance sent the blood to my heart. Once a wealthy landowner he had given up his estates to his tenantry, toiling with them like the humblest peasant with spade and scythe.

In order to prove that modern science had found a better way, I was permitted to demonstrate my American tractors before the zemstvo.

Like a squadron of artillery the tractors were drawn up waiting my order to advance. I sounded my whistle, the air suddenly vibrated with a purr of motors and rumble of wheels.

Under their tireless blades, the grain fell in ordered swaths. Their insatiable maws devoured the golden harvest, leaving behind a desert of stubble. Meanwhile from the threshers a cascade of grain poured ceaselessly into the sacks, which, packed on the backs of ponies, were transported to the river and loaded in barges to be borne to the relief of famine-stricken Russia.

The Master and his friends were unbounded in their

admiration. Never had they seen such a marvel. Returning to the manor we were regaled at a banquet in honour of the successful outcome of my experiment.

"My Friend," cried Ivan Vasilievitch, "what a miracle thou wilt accomplish! This will regenerate Russia! The old shall pass and all become as new!"

Touched by this tribute, I silently wrung his hand then turned to the doorway where stood Sonia gazing out at the wondrous Ukraine night.

"Let me share your reverie," I pleaded.

She flashed an assenting smile, and arm in arm we passed through the dusk-scented garden. Out into the silent moon-lit steppe we wandered down to the Dnieper and embarked in a skiff.

How wondrous it is 'neath the moon's mellow beam
To float down the midst of the limitless tide!
The vast verdant forests a wood-demon seem
Whose long tangled hair floateth forth far and wide,
Enmirrored beneath in the bright-shining stream.

Below, as above, gleam the mounts white with snow
And the wide, wind-swept steppe shineth silvery bright,
Like a gleaming tiara encircling the brow
Of serene Mother Dnieper, asleep 'neath the night.

The waves of the river in rhythmic delight
Croon a lullaby sweet on the fast-fading shore
And the bright moon-lit wold shimmers silvery hoar
In the slumbrous embrace of the Orient night.¹

¹ Gogol.

The river gleamed silver beneath a harvest moon. Overhead glittered a myriad burning stars. A gentle breeze quivered the tips of the willows on the bank. Suddenly from out the velvet gloom thrilled the sad, sweet song of a nightingale. We held our breath listening in silent wonder.

"That is my love for you," I whispered. Sonia yielded unresisting beneath my embrace.

"My brave Amerikanetz, I knew you would come," she smiled.

"But why did you run away?" I remonstrated.

"I could not trust myself," she faltered.

We laughed like happy children, threading our way homeward through the shadowy garden. Only the wistful notes of the nightingale broke the scented hush.

"Love, love," it trilled. In the pool slumbered a lily.

"Sleep sweet, Davidoushka," she smiled, as I bade her goodnight.

IV

THE HOLOCAUST

Dawn was silvering the hill-crests when hoofs clattered in the court and a moujik ran up the stairs.

"Barin!" he gasped, "the Red Guard! They are looting the country-side, burning all behind them. Leave, Master, while the railroad is still open!"

Ivan Vasilievitch shook his head. Till he should ship

his grain all the Reds in Russia would not make him leave.

“But Sonia?” I questioned.

“Take her to Petrograd,” he counselled. “Say you are recalled by urgent business!”

To my relief Sonia showed no surprise at the hurried departure. Promising to join us for the wedding Spiridineff gave us his blessing.

A troika waited at the door. The driver flicked his whip and we galloped off. As we drove through the fields of golden stubble he pointed to a glow on the near horizon.

“See those camp-fires?” he laughed. “Red Guards, come fight Cossacks so they no get Barin’s wheat! My brudder in Austria write his friend Malakoff promise send Red Guard.—Now they come!”

Flinging our luggage on the platform he drove off.

The station was thronged with panic-stricken refugees, rifle-shots and rattle of machine-guns dinned in our ears.

Sudden lights sprang up. A moment later the entire village was a sea of flames!

Sonia screamed as she saw the lighted windows of the manor. Then, as the flames burst through the rafters, swayed dizzily in my arms.

The Kief express pulled in and swept by the onrush of refugees we boarded the teeming train.

Sonia smiled with renewed consciousness. I did not

tell I had seen her father's granary flame up like a geyser of burning oil.

Refusing to surrender, the Reds had prisoned him in his treasury and sprayed the grain with liquid fire, consuming him as in a funeral pyre!

Only weeks later were our fears for Ivan Vasiievitch confirmed. Waiting in vain his coming, day by day Sonia deferred our wedding, obtaining the post of Secretary in the Bureau of Transportation.

Learning that Malakoff was her chief I told of his treachery.

"You know I trust you," I assured her. "But do not remain another day in Petrograd. Let us leave the country while it is still possible!"

Sonia assented, with misty eyes. The following days I laboured feverishly to bring my unsold stock back with us to America via the Trans-Siberian and Pacific. But I found it impossible to get freight cars as they had all been commandeered.

"Malakoff might help," suggested Sonia. "He will be only too glad to see you out of the country."

This seemed plausible and I yielded to her suggestion.

Though feigning not to recognize me, the Chief of Transportation proved surprisingly obliging.

"Give me your passport and an inventory stating that the tractors were manufactured in America and I will put them through without examination!"

After producing the documents, I sought Sonia's hotel.

"Tomorrow," I exulted, "we shall be married! Then good-bye for ever to this land of misrule!"

With a laugh she drew closer the girdle of my arms. Then she went to the piano. Moonbeams silvered her fingers as they flitted over the keys while she sang:

"When faints the heart o'er-burdened
With life's relentless weight,
My soul lifts up a wonder-song
From out the clouds of fate!

A prayer of hope and gladness
Lit with celestial light,
That breathes a faith surpassing fair
In God's exhaustless might.

My heart casts off its burden—
All lingering fears take flight,
My soul lifts up its joy-brimmed eyes
To Heaven's glad light."¹

Next morning bitter disappointment awaited me at the freight-office. My tractors had been delivered but no provision made for their shipment.

The freight superintendent stated that fifty platform cars from Riga had just been consigned to Vladivostock on a bill of lading issued to one David Stephanovitch by the Chief of Transportation.

"Fifty cars!" I shouted. "You mean five!"

¹ Lermontoff.

He pointed triumphantly to his order. The five had been clumsily raised to fifty.

"It looked suspicious," he confessed, "so I inspected the consignment. Camouflaged beneath tarpaulins was a disassembled submarine!"

"How do you know?" I demanded sharply.

Opening a closet he shrugged: "Judge for yourself!"

In the long black tube before me I recognized a periscope. Malakoff's entire plan became instantly clear.

Since it was a risky business to aid Germany in her plot to attack our Pacific coast, he had schemed to make me the scapegoat. I resolved to regain my passport and hurried to the office of the Transportation Chief.

Malakoff was out, Sonia told me.

"The loss of the tractors does not matter," I explained, "nothing matters but getting away immediately!"

"But that will be impossible without a passport. Wait, I have a plan. This evening when all have gone, I will search the safe. Come to the hotel tonight, you shall have your papers!"

Pressing matters claimed my attention and it was late when I reached the hotel, but Sonia had not yet returned. A crumpled newspaper lay upon the floor. Smoothing it out I read:

"The Provincial Soviet of Spiridinovka announce a decree by which all young women become the property of the state. Every man is entitled to the choice of a

wife, *without consent of the woman*, whether maid, wife, or widow."

Fragments of a partly burned letter lay in the fireplace. I pieced them carefully together. Malakoff had instituted this infamous decree, prompted, as he confessed, by his desire for Sonia. Unless she would yield he threatened she would be commandeered by force and sold to the highest bidder.

At that moment the lock turned and trembling and pale Sonia entered.

"I have killed him," she gasped, and taking off her working blouse she threw it into the closet.

"I was searching his desk for your passport when he suddenly came in. I sprang for the door, but he caught me. The next moment I felt the muzzle of a revolver against my face. I wrenched free, but in our struggle the revolver went off and he fell at my feet, blood trickling from his nostrils!"

I soothed her as best I could: "There is no train till morning; I will come for you then," I promised. "Meantime I will get new passports."

An hour before train-time I returned only to find that Sonia had been arrested!

V

RECOMPENSE

Only once before the trial was I permitted to visit Sonia. Double iron grilles barred us, so we could not



“Under the great, red flag, which flapped and tugged like some enormous bird of prey, I discerned plainly the saturnine face of Lenin.”

Permission Press Illustrating Service, Inc.

even exchange hand-clasps. A guard patrolled the corridor listening to our every word.

"Don't worry, Dave," she smiled. "Should the worst come I can bear it if you still love me."

"The worst will not come," I assured her, "if you only have a competent advocate."

"The Judge has assigned me a lawyer, but I shall not speak, my best defence is silence."

The warden rattled his keys. "Time up," he grunted.

"You shall have the best counsel in Petrograd." I insisted and followed the warden.

Time was short. The case was to be tried by an illiterate shyster raised to the rank of Judge because of his hatred of the bourgeoisie.

Danilo Shepkin, advocate for the defence, had failed to break the prisoner's obdurate silence. Since the prosecution would strive to hem her within a wall of circumstantial evidence, he determined to stake all on an alibi.

Feeling that it was unwise to risk so vital an issue on such doubtful testimony, I suggested another line. The coroner's record stated that "Isidor Semyonovitch Malakoff had met death by a bullet from a revolver fired by an unknown hand."

"Why not his own hand?" I questioned.

"Preposterous," grunted Shepkin. "The deceased could not have inflicted the wound on the back of his head, unless his hand had been twisted by an assailant."

"I will prove the contrary," I asserted. But on inquiry at the Morgue I learned that the body had been removed.

"Is this customary?" I questioned in surprise.

No, it was not usual, but no one knew when or on what pretext the removal had taken place. There had been collusion somewhere, but beyond my power to ferret out.

What made the case more mysterious was that Malakoff had no relative in the city who might have desired a private burial. The dvornik had admitted no ambulance, which seemed to dispose of that theory. I wasted precious days in search without discovering a single clue.

"It is best," reiterated Shepkin, "not to complicate the case with suicide or self-defence. I am glad my client has decided to hold her tongue. I shall prove that she was not in Malakoff's office at the hour of the murder. What could be simpler or more conclusive?"

At last the fateful morning came. Long before the case was called the court-room was crammed with a mob of brutish Bolsheviks. In vain I scanned the throng in search of a single sympathetic face. Twelve of the proletariat, drunk with newly acquired authority, filled the jury-box.

At summons of the Judge a clerk droned the indictment.



Interior Cathedral of Saint Vladimir, Kiev

"A recrudescence of the ancient ecclesiastical art."

Copyright by Underwood & Underwood, New York

"You have heard the accusation, Sonia Ivanovna," said the Judge. "What do you say in defence?"

But Sonia remained silent and to his reiterated demands refused to answer.

The public prosecutor, the least scrupulous lawyer in Petrograd, followed with a perfunctory address. His cold eyes, set too close, were never more than half open, yet there was little they did not see. In melodramatic tones he demanded of the preconvinced jury the conviction of the prisoner, reinforcing his argument by calling the gorodovoi who had been on duty at the time of the murder.

The policeman testified that upon the said night he had heard a shot. On being questioned as to the hour he declared he had just counted the strokes of St. Isaac's which had pealed midnight.

"What transpired afterward?" asked the lawyer for the prosecution.

"The prisoner passed me hurrying from the palace."

"Are you certain the woman you saw was the prisoner?"

"Absolutely. I see her every day."

"How was she dressed?"

"In her usual working gown—dark blue, a black silk shawl over her head.

"That will do," smiled the lawyer complacently.

Daddy Yakov, the hotel dvornik, was the next witness. The porter deposed that he admitted Sonia at five

minutes after midnight, the exact time it would take to walk from the palace to the hotel, as the prosecutor noted insinuatingly.

He next called another policeman who testified to finding the blood-stained dress in the prisoner's room.

With this the prosecution rested its case. The chain of circumstantial evidence was incontestable.

But the attorney had scarcely taken his seat when the dvornik was recalled by counsel for the defence.

"At what time that evening," asked Shepkin, "did the accused leave her hotel?"

"The accused?" stammered the dvornik. "Who is that, your honour?"

"The person suspected of the crime," explained the advocate.

"I don't suspect anybody. I haven't the least idea in the world, sir."

"That is quite evident," he smiled. "At what hour did Gospozha¹ Spiridineff go out?"

"Eight o'clock, just after dinner."

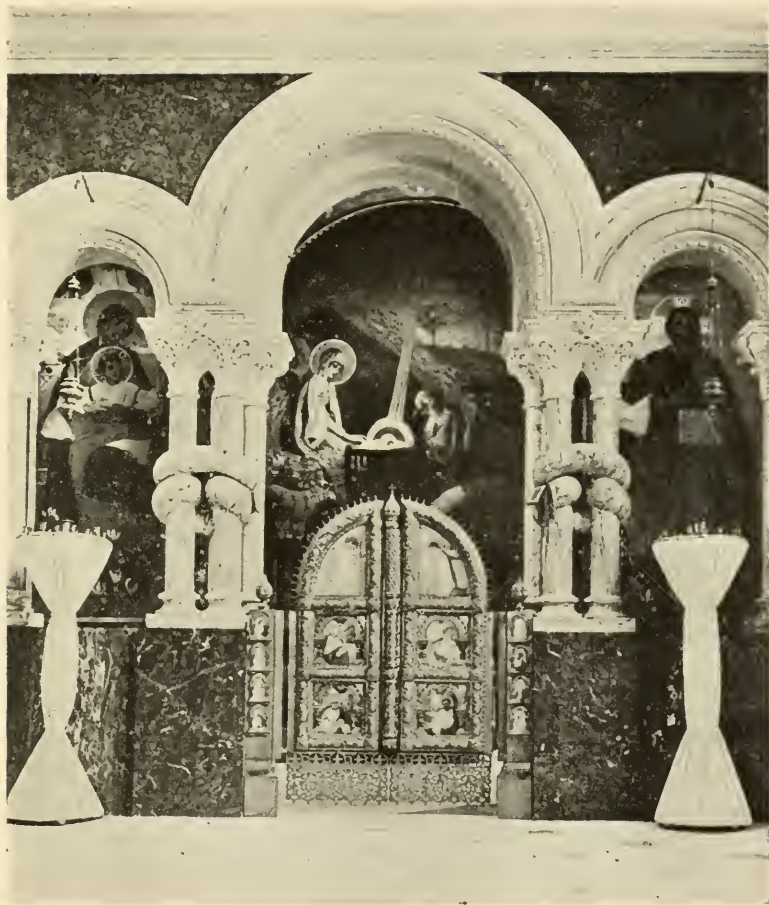
"Do you recall how she was dressed?"

"No, sir, I didn't notice."

Shepkin frowned: "Think!" He shook his forefinger. "Try to remember! Was she not in evening costume with sable cloak?"

Daddy Yakov's face suddenly assumed an expression of comprehension. "Yes, sir, her sable cloak which she

¹ *Gospozha*, Miss.



Shrine of the Nativity, Cathedral of Saint Vladimir, Kiev

Copyright by Underwood & Underwood, New York

always wears when she goes to the opera. That is what I meant to say, sir."

"Then if it was the Gospozha who returned at midnight, dressed in her working gown, she must have come back in the meantime changed her dress, and gone out again. Now Daddy Yakov, did the Gospozha return in the interim?"

"No, your honour, she came back in a *droshky*."

A titter ran over the court-room. The Judge rapped for order. The attorney approached the witness from another angle.

"Can you swear that the woman who came in at midnight, whose face was hidden in a shawl, might not have been someone else?"

"Yes sir, no sir, I don't know, sir," faltered Yakov, utterly nonplussed.

"Gentlemen of the jury!" Shepkin smiled. "It is now evident that during the prisoner's absence the real criminal entered her room, assumed her uniform, committed the murder, and returned the blood-stained garment to throw suspicion upon an innocent girl. Can you not swear, Yakov, that this is true?"

"I don't know, Little Father," he stammered. "I was drunk that night, I could not even see the clock's face. I didn't notice when anybody went out or in, nor the clothes they wore."

"What!" thundered Shepkin. "Did you not this very moment swear——"

"I did not, sir. I promised to say something in return for your generosity, but I've clean forgotten what it was!"

Unsuspecting he had demolished the defence, amid the jeers of the spectators Daddy Yakov tottered from the stand.

"She is lost!" groaned Shepkin. "Nothing can save her now!"

"Call me to the witness-stand," I insisted despite his protest.

Sonia lifted pleading eyes as with trembling voice I addressed the Court:

"Gentlemen of the jury, Sonia Ivanovna Spiridineff is innocent! Believing that Justice would be established, I have maintained silence, but can no longer withhold my confession. I shot Malakoff."

A hush fell over the court-room. Secret mutterings swelled to a menacing uproar.

"Shoot the damned Amerikanetz," they shouted. "Shoot him against a wall!"

After the tumult had subsided, the Judge demanded sternly: "What was your motive?"

As I recounted the treachery of Malakoff; interrupting, the Judge bade me state briefly how I committed the murder.

"I went to his office to get my passport. Without warning he drew a revolver. Not risking any chance I fired first! Miss Spiridineff, who was in the next room,

ran to his assistance, and stained her sleeve with his blood. That is all, your Honour."

In a riot of cheers and hisses I took my seat.

The prosecutor shouted: "Your honour, I demand time to expose the falsity of this confession. It is a ruse to shield the real offender. Your honour I call——"

But before he could name his witness Sonia rose:

"The Amerikanetz was not even present," she declared. "Bending back the pistol with which he threatened me I accidentally killed Isidor Malakoff."

Pandemonium burst forth anew, but the sympathy of the mob was on our side. To shield the woman I loved I had lied. In her devotion to me Sonia had told the truth!

The Judge was bewildered. In his confusion he granted the plea of the prosecutor and adjourned the court, remanding us both to prison.

A year passed. We were officially forgotten!

Danilo Shepkin alone visited me at infrequent intervals. "When the trial is reopened, it can only be to render sentence," he explained hopelessly.

Famine stalked throughout the land, even our pitance of prison fare had been reduced. We might be executed at any moment to conserve it.

I wrote to the United States Government and to the press imploring aid for Russia's starving thousands.

But no answer came to my entreaties. "The world," I thought, "is incredulous of Russia's urgent need."

One morning a sudden rumble as of distant thunder struck my ear. What could it mean? The allied blockade had imposed a deathlike silence. News from outside had been denied me. I could only wonder and hope, for any change must be for the better.

Again I heard that roar of sullen, menacing thunder. As it grew louder my heart leaped: "The Allies!" I cried. "At last the Allies have come!"

With a rattle of bolts the door swung wide and Shepkin entered.

"My friend," he gasped, his face white and grim, "Lenine has condemned you both to the death penalty."

A clank of arms sounded in the corridor.

"The firing-squad! Good-bye, good friend!" he faltered, as he wrung my hand.

For a moment I stood dazed, then: "May I not see her?" I questioned eagerly.

Danilo nodded: "Your last moments will be together!"

Her eyes bandaged, pale but calm, Sonia stood against the prison wall as the Red Guards led me to her side.

"Our troubles are ended," she smiled. "Only a moment's pain, dear, then eternal peace!"



Cathedral of Archangel

"Slender domes and picturesque exterior murals."

Permission American Red Cross

The firing-squad were standing at ease waiting their officer.

Beyond, in the crowded square, under the great red flag, which flapped like an enormous bird of prey, I discerned the saturnine face of Lenine.

"Attention!" shouted a youthful lieutenant, and the guards fell into line.

At that instant there suddenly sounded a trumpet blast. Sonorous and compelling, clear as a cathedral bell, it swelled, pealing a message of peace and good will to men.

It was the great siren of the American steamship *Titan*.

"Be of good cheer!" it clamoured, "starving hosts of Russia! Food I bring in plenty—meat and flour to replace the Ukraine wheat your reckless rulers ruined!"

The lieutenant lifted his sword.

"Ready," he shouted. "Aim!" The firing-squad levelled rifles.

"Stop!" called Lenine. "Hold in the name of the law!" The guards grounded arms.

With lagging steps passed a file of deported Anarchists from the United States. First in the uncouth procession, haggard, and panic-white, walked—Malakoff!

Summoned before the tribunal he confessed that after falling unconscious, he had recovered during the night, and had bribed the watchman to assist his escape. Re-

turning to his office he pretended that he had missed the funds of the Soviet and in fear of arrest had fled. By means of my passport he had escaped to America, where he had played a prominent rôle in the ranks of the Radicals until deported to Russia as a dangerous alien.

He surveyed the court-room defiantly. "What I have done," he boasted, "has only been for the people and the cause of Internationalism!"

The Judge rose. "I hereby declare the previous sentence null and void. Sonia Spiridineff and Gospodin Stepanovitch you are now at liberty."

A burly figure strode suddenly forward and laid his hand upon Malakoff's arm: "I arrest you," he cried, "in the name of the Extraordinary Commission."¹

Malakoff cringed in terror before his captor, whom I recognized as the German of the Little Russian restaurant.

"Malakoff is wanted in Moscow? On what charge?" demanded the Judge.

"In Berlin," corrected the agent. "He was paid by the German Government to send submarines to the Pacific against the United States. He betrayed his trust and sold them to Japan. The scoundrel has double-crossed us!"

Malakoff's hand suddenly shot into the air. A burst of blinding light, then a detonation!

¹ Extraordinary Commission, a body empowered to imprison and execute without trial.



Monastery of St. Michael Archangel

"Above its high stockade the church lifts gleaming walls and massive golden domes."

Permission American Red Cross

“A bomb,” I cried dragging Sonia from the fumes. But before it had left his hand, he tripped and fell and Isidor Semyonovitch Malakoff was beyond the jurisdiction of human courts!

To you, O wind-blown steppe and forests free,
With joyous haste my eager footsteps turn,
The world is Spring! The burgeoned branches burn
With quickened life, aflame with ecstasy!
Forgotten fades the city's slavery,
Amid thy greening hills and flowering plain
The fettered soul shakes off its chafing chain
And leaps exultant forth to liberty!

Forgotten fade the flames of passion red
And cold remorse and black, relentless pain.
The smouldering pyre of life is cold and dead,
Yet here with Earth's rebirth my heart doth sing
And all my soul gives forth a glad refrain,
Glory to God! Again the world is spring! NADSON.

Years have passed since a girl with despairing dark eyes and terror-blanchèd cheeks first found her timid way into my heart.

As with our little Ivan and Sonia my wife and I ride across endless versts of our waving wheat-fields yielding their golden grain to my tireless tractors, the blood-drenched days of “The Terror” seem but a dim, forgotten nightmare.

Russia at last has repudiated communism, overthrown the Red Tyrant of Bolshevism and blundered to the Light!

CHAPTER XI

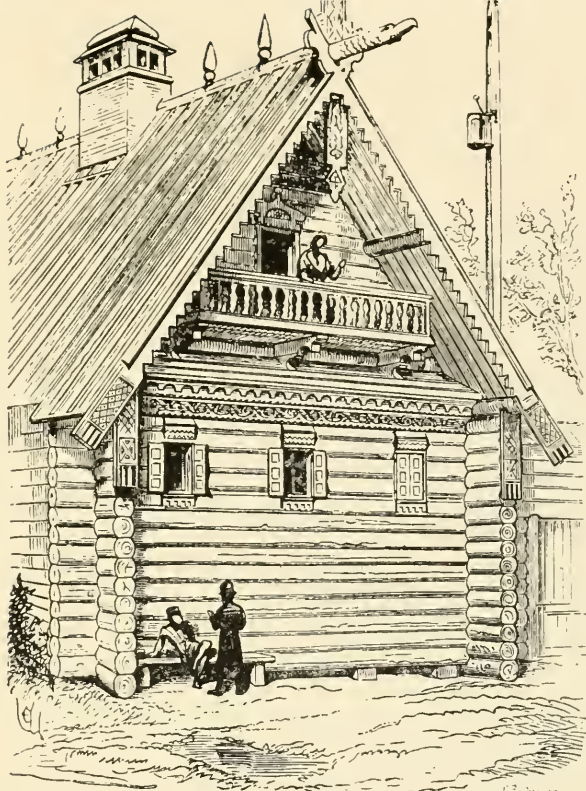
SHRINES OF ANCIENT MUSCOVY

O Kief, thou holy city of the night,
O'er whose great golden domes the cross doth beam
Like some calm star with calm celestial light
Lustrous and pure, a sainted shrine you seem;
Where, like a diadem of jewels bright,
Fair, flowery meads around thy ramparts gleam,
As through the wind-swept steppe, with ceaseless song,
Glideth Dame Dnieper onward ever young.

On dome and tower the silver moonbeams fall,
Enmirrored dimly in the river deep.
The spirit of the past broods ever here
Where deathless heroes 'neath thy crosses sleep.
Rurik and Igor, Fair Sun Vladimir
And brave Dobrynya knightliest of all;
Whose ancient glory, still by minstrels sung,
Like Mother Dnieper liveth ever young.

Where are those dauntless knights of shining day,
Whose chargers swept the steppe like sudden fires?
And where the dazzling dames of bright array
Whose amorous smiles entranced our gallant sires?
Where are the days of eld so blithe and gay?
All vanished now, like "snows of yesterday"!
Only Dame Dnieper still, with ceaseless song,
Glideth for ever onward ever young. KOZLOV.

KIEF is an appropriate starting-point for an architectural pilgrimage, for here the first church built on Russian soil was founded by Vladimir



A Moujik's Izba

"Balconies and curiously carved gables."



"Mansion of a Boyar with its Covered Exterior Stairway."

From *L'Art Russe*, by Viollet-le-Duc

when the worship of the ancient deities was relinquished.

The legend runs that Fair Sun Vladimir, most catholic of princes, having lost faith in the ancient Slavic pantheism, despatched a mission to neighbouring lands to study their religious cults.

On their return the elders reported unfavourably of the Mohammedan, Jewish, and Roman Catholic religions; but were unanimous in praise of the Christian faith as practised in the Greek Church of Santa Sofia at Constantinople.

“Lastly,” they said, “we went to the Greeks and when they led us into the place where they serve their God, we knew not whether we were in heaven or upon earth, for in the whole earth is not such beauty. There in truth doth God meet man. We are not able to forget that beauty. A man who hath once tasted the sweet will not accept the bitter.”

Thereupon Vladimir and all the people were converted to Christianity and Byzantine ecclesiastical art was introduced.

Russia boasts many grandiose buildings in the Renaissance style which would be equally appropriate in Paris or Vienna, but the mode introduced by Peter the Great was a slavish copying of European models, whereas the style evolved between the reigns of Vladimir and Ivan the Terrible has a character truly national. We will endeavour to sketch briefly the most notable ex-

amples of this ancient Muscovite type, indicating the sources and progress of its evolution.

Viollet Le Duc, the eminent French archæologist, remarks, in his scholarly treatise, *L' Art Russe*:

Made up of several diverse elements, in which the Slav predominated, the Russian people, when the vast empire began to be established, was in too close communication with Byzantium not to have been strongly dominated by Byzantine influences, but none the less each of these elements possessed certain racial traits which impressed a distinctive character upon contemporary Russian Art.

Like the Varengians, a race of Norsemen who settled in Russia under Rurik in the beginning of the tenth century, the Slavs had little knowledge of other than wood-construction, but they had already developed considerable skill in carpentry.

Till the end of the tenth century Russian architecture was entirely of wood and it was only then that the Russians began to employ masonry. In the religious edifices of this period, particularly in the vaulting, the structure of which is strongly inspired by Byzantine art, the Russians applied an ornamentation derived from various Asiatic sources.

"All the dominant elements in Russian Art," says Monsieur Le Duc, "belong to Asia—Iranians, Persians, Mongols, all have furnished tribute."

Russia is a "melting-pot" in which the arts of the remotest parts of the Orient have been fused into a



Church of the Nativity, Moscow

" Five tall towers thrust their slender spires in a surprising silhouette."

Copyright by Underwood & Underwood, New York

transitional type, which marks the meeting of the Eastern and Western worlds.

From the earliest times the Muscovite church-builders employed a plan which differs materially from that of the Byzantine architects and recalls more the ecclesiastical architecture of mediæval Greece. In Georgia and Armenia are a number of churches which bear this special stamp denoting an unmistakable Greek influence. But while these traditions survived for a time, as soon as masonry replaced wood in the construction of religious edifices, Russian architecture became coherent and assumed an individuality wholly its own. An ancient Armenian legend traces the dome to two rainbows crossing at right angles on which sat our Saviour when he appeared to St. Gregory.

In the thirteenth century the Tartar-Mongol invasion swept the land with irresistible force and, through the importation of Oriental craftsmen, brought Russia into direct contact with that mediæval Orient so rich and brilliant in all its art. Asia, the ancient mother of civilization, tended the cradle of Russian art till it grew to be a precocious child, whose maturity might well have been marvellous had not the ardour with which Russia under Peter and Catharine threw itself on the works of Italy, Germany, and France prevented its full development.¹

Until the seventeenth century the plan of the Russian church was scarcely modified.

¹ For the evolution of the bulbous cupola see Rosa Newmarch's admirable *Russian Art*.

“To a single cupola of the more ancient churches were added four others smaller, and sometimes four more, smaller still and lower. If we imagine the drums of these cupolas surmounting the height of the roofs we will understand the astonishing effect of the silhouette.”

The Desiatinaja (Church of the Tithes) was built in 989. Totally destroyed in the burning of Kief by Batu Khan in 1240 during the Mongol invasion, it was not restored until 1631. This holocaust swept away some six hundred churches.

The Cathedral of St. Sophia built by Yaroslav, son of Vladimir, in 1037, restored by Nogile and Mazeppa in the seventeenth century, resembles St. Mark's at Venice and has been rightfully called “the Marvel of the Ukraine.” Greatest of the old cathedrals it contains authentic Byzantine frescoes, depicting huntsmen pursuing wild beasts, pirouetting dancers, and a chariot-race.

The recent restoration of the Vladimir Cathedral has brought about a recrudescence of ancient ecclesiastical art. Victor Vasnetsov, an artist of imagination and religious fervour, and M. V. Nesterov, a painter of exquisite sentiment, have here collaborated in a work of great distinction.

Before leaving Kief a visit should be made to the Monastery of the Lavra. Mother of all Russian monasteries and greatest in extent, it is of considerable historic as well as architectural interest.



Church of Our Saviour, Moscow

“Massive central dome and four flanking cupolas—a revival of the purest Oriental type.”

Copyright by Underwood & Underwood, New York

Here, in the eleventh century, lived and wrote the first Russian chronicler, Nestor. In its catacombs is still shown the tomb of Ilya of Murom translated from pagan demigod to Christian saint.

“Till the end of the seventeenth century,” remarks Hare, “there were only two printing-presses in Russia; one was at this convent and one in Moscow.

“The huge church has a frescoed façade and the interior has an aspect of indescribable antiquity, colour, and beauty. The foundation of all the colour is ancient gold which gleams through the dark shadows of the heavy pillars with effects of light and shade unspeakably glorious.”

Kief was four times sacked and burned and, in 1158, the capital was transferred to Vladimir, which remained the seat of government until its removal to Moscow in 1328.

On his northward journey the tourist should pause at Tchernigov and visit the most ancient of all existing Russian churches. Built in 1036 by Prince Mistislav, “more than any church of its age this cathedral retains its original external character. It is square with a central dome surrounded by four satellite cupolas; to the east are three apses and the narthex is flanked by two round towers.”

A most fascinating archæological pilgrimage may be made from Moscow, pausing first at the famous Troitsa monastery, whose humble beginning was built

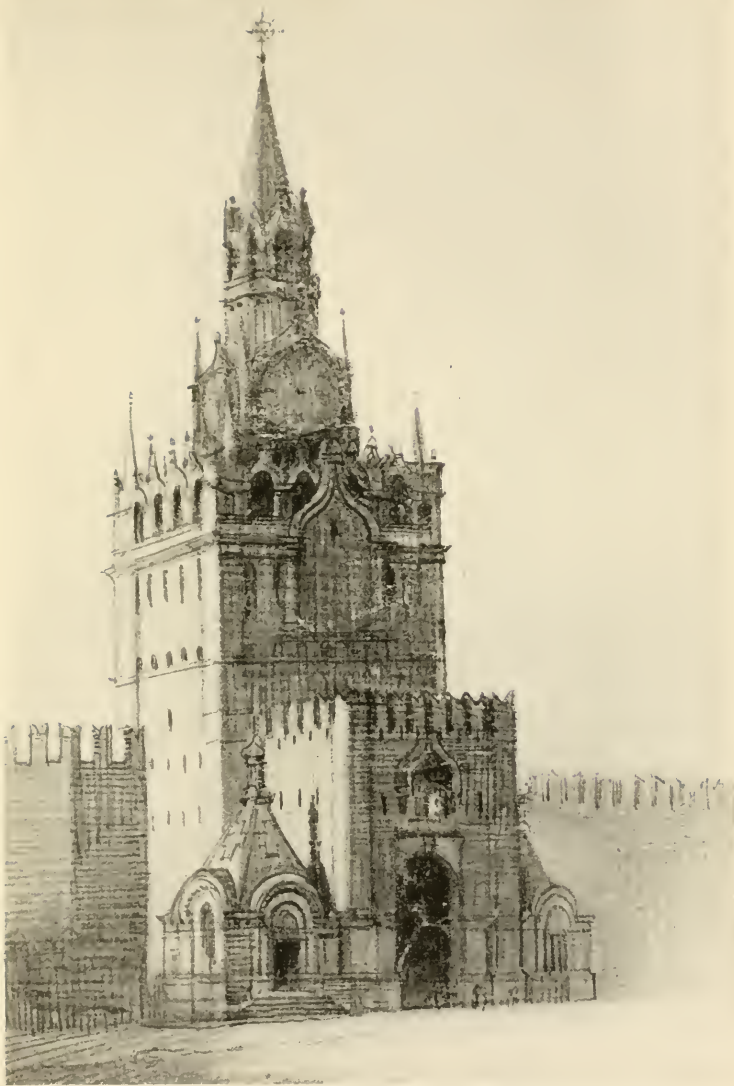
by the carpenter-monk St. Sergius; but which afterward grew into the wealthiest of all Russian monastic communities.

Next, visiting Rostoff and the Church of St. John the Theologian, founded in 1213, we enjoy a delightful surprise in the "Holy Door," which though executed by Russian architects is "a Hindu-Persian work of extreme delicacy."

At Yaroslav we discover in its cathedral and churches, mines of archæological treasure. The tourist should there embark on "Mother Volga" for Nijni Novgorod if the great fair is in progress, though the city itself contains little of interest.

The Uspenski Cathedral at Vladimir, erected in 1158, by Andrew Boboliouski, is a relic of the ancient splendour which made the city a new Kief. The same prince, at the neighbouring town of Pokrova, built, in 1165, the Church of the Intercession of the Blessed Virgin, one of the purest remaining examples of the primitive Muscovite type. The sculpture in the central tympanum shows the Saviour surrounded by archaic symbols of the Evangelists.

Among buildings most familiar to our soldiers are the Cathedral of Archangel and the Monastery of St. Michael, Archangel. The former is a graceful structure with slender domes and picturesque external murals. Built in 1709, it contains, among other relics, a wooden cross carved by Peter the Great. Above its high stock-



The Spasskoi Gate (Gate of Our Saviour)

“Through whose sacred portal none may enter without uncovering.”

From a drawing by Frère Champney

ade and squat block-houses the Monastery Church lifts gleaming walls and massive golden domes.

As we journey from town to town, questing the picturesque, the *izbas* of the *moujik* strike our gaze. Unchanged for centuries, they recall the Swiss chalets with their heavy overhanging roofs and walls of hewn logs. Covered outer stairways lead to the upper stories; while balconies and curiously carved gables, painted in bright colours, give a cheery aspect to the otherwise squalid villages. Within, a huge stove, faced with tiles, occupies a prominent place. On a shelf above, the old people and children warmly sleep though a blizzard blows without.

In striking contrast to the peasant's hut the mansion of the boyars was most sumptuously appointed. The mediæval nobles dispensed a prodigal hospitality, their tables groaning with gold and silver plate.¹ An outer staircase gave access to the main story, which contained suites of apartments for the entertainment of guests. The second story consisted of the *terem* or women's apartments, while in the basement and attic dwelt an enormous retinue of servants. A well-appointed house of a Russian boyar in addition to the French, Russian, and German masters, and the family physician, had an astonishing number of servants. Among these were the

¹ Jenkinson, Ambassador to the Court of Ivan the Terrible, describes a centre-piece of gold, two yards long, composed of heads of dragons flanked by golden towers.

Secretary, the Superintendent of Accounts, the *dvorezki* (maître d' hôtel), the valets of the lord, similar adjuncts of the lady, the *dyatka* (overseer of the children), the footman, the *buffetshek* (butler), the table setter, the head groom, the coachman and postilions of the lord, the similar encumbrances of the lady, the porters, head cook and assistant, the baker, confectioner, stove heater, kvass-brewer, and a host of waiting maids, tutors, governesses, nurses, and undernurses.

The ancient bylinas give us a hint of the sumptuous homes of the nobility. One wonders how the illumination described in Sadko's house could have been achieved without the aid of electricity.

Sadko, the rich merchant of Novgorod, built himself a palace of white stone, wherein all things were heavenly. In the sky, the red sun burned, and in his palace likewise a fair red sun; and when shone the lesser light, the moon, in heaven, in his palace it shone also; and when the thick-sown stars glittered in the sky, stars thickly sown gleamed within his towers. And Sadko adorned his palace of white stone in all ways.¹

Near the Kremlin, in Moscow, on the Varvarka or Street of St. Barbara, still stands the residence of Nikita Romanoff. Here Michael, first of the Romanoff Tsars, was born. The ancient mansion has been scrupulously preserved and displays the typical features of a boyar's "Palata." Built on a hillside, the street façade con-

¹ *Epic Songs of Russia*, Elizabeth Florence Hapgood.



Bell Tower of Ivan Veliki

"Whose great tocsin often summoned the populace to stormy deliberations in the Kremlin Court."

Copyright Underwood & Underwood, New York

sists of only one story but the rear front shows three. Everywhere one remarks the Romanoff rampant lion. The ground-floor houses the kitchens and services with their enormous fire-places. In the first story are five long rooms whose windows are glazed with talc. The first was the chapel, next follow Nikita's reception-room and study, then the family living-rooms, now converted into a museum of historic furniture, where may be seen Nikita's sword, Philaret's crozier, the sceptre of Michael, and various Romanoff heirlooms.

Outside the Kremlin, the most notable Moscow edifices are St. Basil's, the Church of Our Saviour, and the Church of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin.

The most fantastic and astonishing of all earthly churches is Vassili Blagenoi (St. Basil the Blessed) in Moscow.

Built by Ivan the Terrible, to commemorate his capture of Kazan, it stands as the climax of ecclesiastical architecture from the tenth to the sixteenth centuries. Photographs give but a weak conception of this capricious creation, its bulbous domes faceted with golden convolutions and gleaming with multicoloured tiles.

The legend tells that Ivan showed his appreciation by putting out the eyes of the architect, lest he should ever surpass his own handiwork. Fergusson comments, "We may feel grateful that nothing so barbarous was ever afterward attempted in Europe."

The Church of the Nativity is a striking example of the ancient type. Five tall towers: a great central bell-tower, three front towers, and one over the sanctuary, lift their pyramidal spires and bulbous cupolas in a surprising silhouette.

The Church of Our Saviour, built to commemorate the deliverance of Moscow from the French, is the largest in the city. Square in plan, with dominant central dome and four minor cupolas, it represents a revival of the purest Oriental type.

The crown of the ancient Muscovite realm, as of modern Moscow, is the Kremlin.

As Théophile Gautier so aptly expresses it¹:

The Kremlin, or citadel, resembles the Alhambra. Like the Moorish fortress it stands on the top of a hill which it encloses with its wall flanked by towers: it contains royal dwellings, churches and squares, and, among the ancient buildings, a modern Palace whose intrusion we regret as we do the Palace of Charles V. amid the delicate Saracenic architecture which it seems to crush with its weight.

Above its lofty crenelated walls and ornamented roofs, bulbous bell-towers gleaming with gold float like glittering bubbles in the blazing light. "The white walls seem to be a silver basket holding a bouquet of golden flowers and we fancy that we are gazing upon one of those magical cities which the imagination of the

¹ *Voyage en Russie*. See *Turrets, Towers, and Temples* by Esther Singleton.



Cathedral of the Uspensky (The Assumption)

"One of the finest ecclesiastical edifices in Russia wherein the Tsars were formerly crowned."

Copyright Underwood & Underwood, New York

Arabian story-tellers alone can build, an architectural crystallization of the Thousand and One Nights.”

We enter the Kremlin by the Spasskoi Gate,¹ a great square tower, of three diminishing stories crowned with an octagonal belfry and gilded spire. On each face of the second story stands a colossal clock whose gilded dials may be seen from all points of the compass.

Emerging from the portal we find ourselves in the main court of the Kremlin, surrounded by the most bewildering phantasmagoria of bell-towers, palaces, and cathedrals that the mind may imagine. It belongs to no recognized style of architecture. It is not Greek, it is not Byzantine, it is not Saracen, it is all of these together—it is Muscovite! Never did architecture more original, more indifferent to rule, in a word more romantic, materialize with such fantastic caprice.

The Bell Tower of Ivan Veliki, built in the seventeenth century by the Tsar Boris, dominates all surrounding buildings. To the top of its gilded cross, above the conquered crescents, it is two hundred and seventy feet in height. On every story are arches in which are hung more than thirty brazen bells, whose tocsin often summoned the populace to stormy deliberations in the Kremlin Court.

Within the citadel stand three cathedrals, closely associated with the lives of the Tsars: The Cathedral of the Annunciation, their place of baptism and mar-

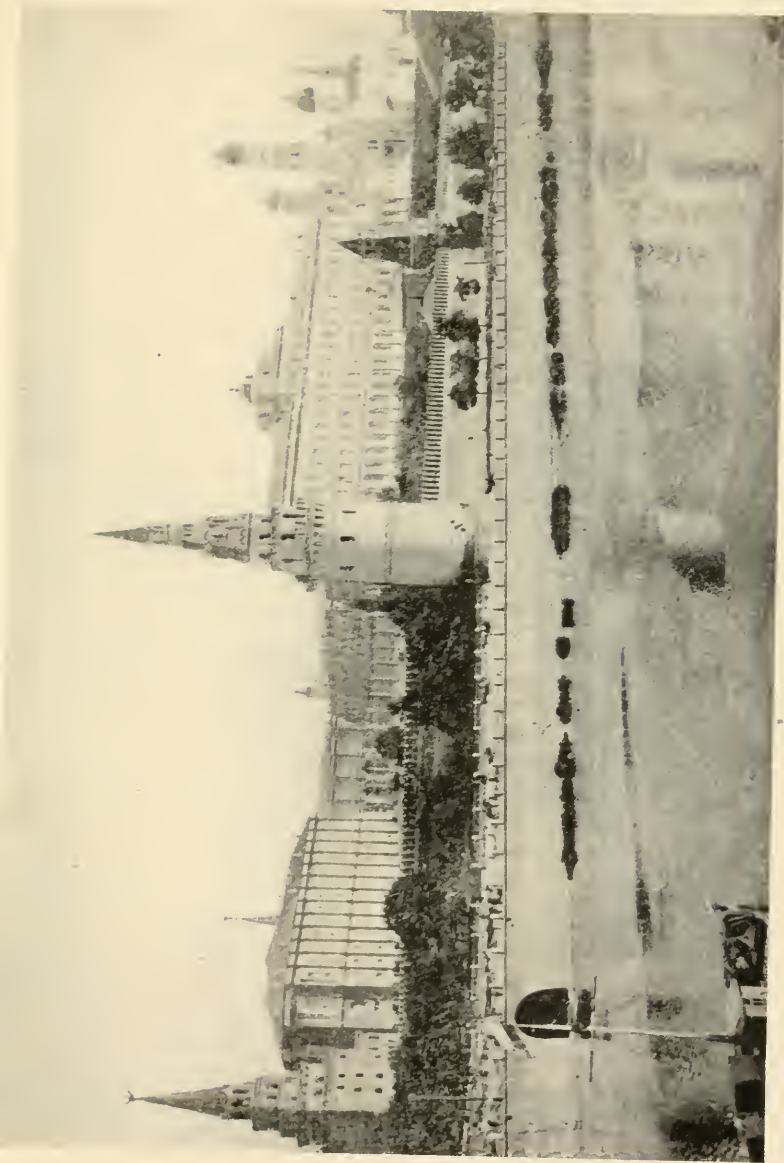
¹ Gate of Our Saviour.

riage, the Cathedral of the Archangel Michael (built 1333), wherein they were entombed, and the great Cathedral of the Assumption (the Uspensky) in which the coronation ceremony took place.

This last is one of the finest ecclesiastical edifices in Russia and its interior, where during his occupation of Moscow Napoleon stabled his horses, is the most magnificent. Built by Ivan III. in the fifteenth century, it was designed by Fioramenti, of Bologna. One would more readily believe it the work of some Byzantine architect, whose mind was filled with memories of Santa Sofia. Four colossal columns, "massive as the pillars of Karnak," support the central dome, surrounded by four satellite cupolas, the whole embellished with archaic murals gleaming with beaten gold.

Nothing could be more astounding than this decoration, where thousands of figures surround you like a mute assemblage, ascending and descending the entire length of the walls in files in Christian panathenæa, standing alone in poses of hieratic rigidity, bending over to the pendentives and draping the temple with a human tapestry swarming with motionless beings that look at you with fixed eyes and seem to threaten you with hands outstretched in benediction.

"The iconostase, a lofty screen of silver-gilt with five rows of figures, like the façade of some golden palace, dazzles the eye with its fabled magnificence." From its gleaming filigree peer dim Madonnas and saints, their aureoles ablaze with precious stones.



The Kremlin

"Above its crenellated walls the interminable classic cornices seem wearisome and out of place 'mid these Oriental mosques darting heavenward golden spires and bulbous bell-towers."

From *Towers and Towers* by Esther Sinclair, reprinted in *The Moscow Review*, Vol. 1, No. 1, 1917.

"The madness of religious extravagance," says Gautier, "can go no further."

At the side of the New Palace stands the palace of the Kremlin, "a chimera of sumptuous and barbaric imagination," erected under Ivan III. by the architect Alevisio. An arcaded outer stairway, where, after his coronation, the Tsar was wont to display himself to his subjects, gives access to the building. "It is to Moscow what the Giant's Stairway is to Venice," and is known as the *Krasanoi Kriltosi*, the famous Red Stairway. Here were enacted many gruesome tragedies, in which its ensanguined steps well merited their name.

The interior of the palace defies description. Its chambers and passages seem "like a labyrinth excavated in some cyclopean block of stone," they are so strangely entangled, so tortuous and complicated, so incessantly changing level and direction.

We walk through them as in a dream, at times stopped by a grille which opens mysteriously, at times forced to follow a narrow, dark passage in which our shoulders almost brush both walls, emerging after our intramural journey into a hall with a rich and riotous wildness of ornamentation, at the end of which we are surprised at not seeing the Grand Khan of Tartary seated cross-legged upon his carpet of black felt!

Such a hall is the Golden Chamber, which fills the entire Granitovaya Palata (The Facet Palace), so called because of its façade cut in diamond facets.

“With scant regard for symmetry this fairy architecture rises like a honeycomb of soap-bubbles, each little cell taking its place adjoining its neighbour, arranging its angles and facets till the whole glitters with colours diapered with iris.”

In this style one wishes they had built the New Palace, a vast Renaissance structure which would be impressive elsewhere, but which clashes sadly with its Muscovite surroundings. Its interminable cornices seem wearisome and out of place among these fantastic palaces and “this throng of Oriental mosques, darting heavenward their golden forest of domes, spires, and bulbous bell-towers.”

Under Bolshevik régime the ancient Muscovite architecture is now looked upon as barbarous. Despised and neglected, churches and cathedrals have fallen into desuetude, symbols of a creed outworn, shrines of a forsaken faith!

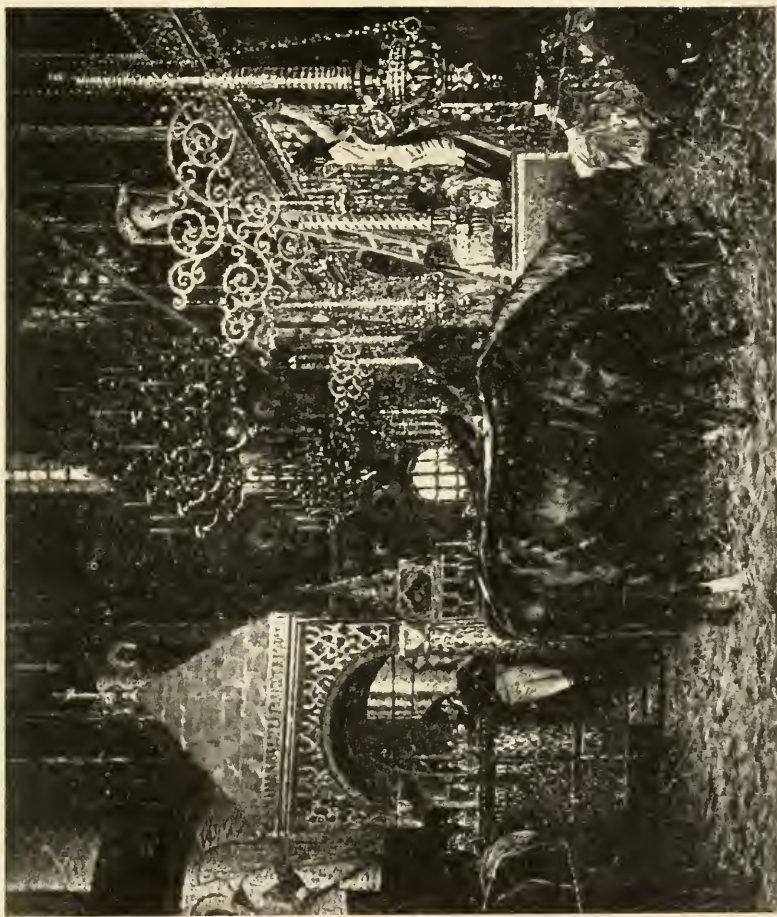
In the words of the Oriental Mystic:

Fiercely they rent into pieces the carpet woven by ages of prayer for the welcome of the World's best hope.

The great preparation of love lies in a waste-heap and there is nothing in the ruined altar to remind the mad crowd of the coming of their God.

In a fury of passion they seem to have burnt their own future to cinders and with it their hope of the flowering time. The air is harsh with the shout, “Victory to the Brute!”

THE END



Interior Cathedral of the Assumption

"In whose golden cavern were stabled the steeds of Napoleon."

By Vassili Verestchagin

P. C. G. Toni Landau Co.

4b 4238

**THE LIBRARY
UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA
Santa Barbara**

**THIS BOOK IS DUE ON THE LAST DATE
STAMPED BELOW.**



3 1205 01121 6767

UC SOUTHERN REGIONAL LIBRARY FACILITY



AA 000 273 128 9

